

MEDITATIONS
AND
CONTEMPLATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING

CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE NIGHT;
CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE STARRY HEAVENS,
AND, A WINTER-PIECE.

BY THE LATE
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EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR GIL. MARTIN AND SONS.
M.DCC.LXXVII.



T O
PAUL ORCHARD,
O F
STOCK-ABBAY, in DEVONSHIRE, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

AS your honoured father was pleased to make choice of me to answer in your name at the font, and to exercise a sort of *guardianship* over your spiritual interests; permit me, by putting these little treatises into your hand, to fulfil some part of that solemn obligation.

GRATITUDE for many signal favours, and a conscientious regard to my sacred engagement, have long ago inspired my breast with the warmest wishes, both for your true *dignity*, and real *happiness*. Nor can I think of a more endearing, or a more effectual, way of advancing either the one or the other, than to set before you a sketch of your excellent *father's* character.—Illustrious examples are the most winning incitements to virtue. And none can come attended with such particular recommendations to You, Sir, as the pattern of that worthy person, from whom you derive your very being.

A MOST cordial and reverential esteem for the *divine Word*, was one of his remarkable qualities. Those oracles of Heaven were his principal delight, and his inseparable companions. Your gardens,

your solitary walks, and the hedges of your fields, can witness *, with what an unwearied assiduity he exercised himself in the law of the LORD. From hence he fetched his maxims of wisdom, and formed his judgment of things. The sacred *precepts* were the model of his temper, and the guide of his life; while the precious *promises* were the joy of his heart, and his portion for ever.

IMPROVING company was another of his most relishing pleasures. Few gentlemen were better furnished, either with richness of fancy, or copiousness of expression, to bear a shining part in conversation. With these talents, he always endeavoured to give some *useful*, generally some *religious*, turn to the discourse. Nor did he ever reflect, with greater complacency, on his social hours, than when they tended to glorify the eternal Majesty; and to awaken, in himself and others, a more lively spirit of devotion.

TO project for the good of others, was his frequent *study*; and to carry those benevolent contrivances into execution, his favourite *employ*. When visited by the young persons of the neighbourhood, far from taking an ungraceful pride to initiate them in debauchery, or confirm them in a riotous habit; it was his incessant aim, by finely-adapted persuasives, to encourage them in *industry*, and establish them in a course of *sobriety*; to guard them against the allurements of vice, and *animate* them with the principles of piety. A noble kind of hospitality this! which will probably transmit its beneficial influence to their earthly possessions, to their future families, and even to their everlasting state.

* *Josh.* xxiv. 27.

A CONVICTION of human indigence, and a thorough persuasion of the Divine all-sufficiency, induced him to be *frequent in prayer*. To prostrate himself, in profound adoration, before that infinitely exalted Being, who dwells in light inaccessible, was *his glory*; to implore the continuance of the almighty favour, and the increase of all Christian graces, was *his gain*. In those moments, no doubt, he remembered You, Sir, with a particular earnestness; and lodged many an ardent petition in the court of heaven, for his infant-son. Cease not to second them with your own devout supplications, that they may descend upon your head, "in the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace."

TO give their genuine lustre to all his other endowments, he was careful to maintain an *humble mind*. Though his friends might admire his superior abilities, or his acquaintance applaud his exemplary behaviour, he saw how far he *felt short* of the mark of his high calling; saw, and lamented his defects; saw, and renounced himself, relying, for final acceptance, and endless felicity, on a *better righteousness* than his own; even on the transcendently perfect righteousness, and inconceivably gracious death of JESUS the Redeemer. This was the rock of his hope, and the very crown of his rejoicing.

THESE, Sir, are some of the *distinguishing* characteristics of your deceased parent. As you had the misfortune to lose so valuable a relative, before you was capable of forming any acquaintance with his person; I flatter myself, you will the more attentively observe his picture: this his *moral picture*; designed, not to be set in gold, or sparkle in ena-

mel, but to breathe in your spirit, and to live in all your conduct.—Which, though it be entirely your own, calculated purely for yourself, may possibly (like the family-pieces in your parlour, that glance an eye upon as many as enter the room) make some *pleasing* and *useful* impression on every beholder.—May every one, charmed with the beautiful image, catch its resemblance; and each, in his respective sphere, “go and do likewise.”

BUT you, Sir, are peculiarly concerned to copy the amiable original. As the order of an indulgent Providence has made you heir of the *affluent circumstances*, let not a gay and thoughtless inadvertence cut you off from the *richer inheritance* of these noble qualifications.—These will be your security, amidst all the glittering dangers, which are inseparable from blooming years, and an elevated situation in life. These are your path, your sure and only path, to true greatness, and solid happiness.—Tread in these steps, and you cannot fail to be the darling of your friends, and the favourite of Heaven. Tread in these steps, and you will give inexpressible joy to one of the best of mothers; you will become an extensive blessing to your fellow-creatures; and which, after such most engaging motives, is scarce worthy to be mentioned, you will be the delight, the honour, and the boast of,

Dear SIR,

Your very affectionate godfather,

and most faithful humble servant,

Weston-Favell, near
Northampton,
July 14 1747.

JAMES HERVEY.

P R E F A C E.

WE have already exercised our speculations on the Tombs and Flowers; surveying Nature, covered with the deepest horrors, and arrayed in the richest beauties. *Allegory*, taught many of the objects to speak the language of virtue, while *Imagination* lent her colouring to give the lessons an engaging air.—And this, with a view of imitating that *divine* Instructor; who commissioned the *lily* *, in her silver suit, to remonstrate in the ear of unbelieving reason; who sent his disciples (men ordained to *teach* the universe) to *learn* maxims of the last importance from the most *insignificant* birds *, that wander through the paths of the air; from the very *meanest* herbs *, that are scattered over the face of the ground †.

* *Matth. vi. 26,—30.*

† Celebrated writers, as *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, *Thucydides* and *Livy*, are observed to have a style peculiar to themselves.—Now, whoever considers the discourses of *CHRIST*, will find him distinguishing himself by a style, which may properly be called *HIS OWN*. Majestic, yet familiar; happily uniting dignity with condescension; it consists, in teaching his followers the *sublimest* truths, by spiritualizing on the most *common* occurrences: which, besides its being level to the lowest apprehensions, and admirably adapted to steal into the most inattentive heart, is accompanied with this very singular advantage, that it turns even the *sphere of business* into a *school of instruction*; and renders the most ordinary objects a set of monitors, ever soliciting our regard, because ever present to our senses.—So that, I believe, it may be said of this *amiable method* in which our *LORD* conveyed, as well as of that *powerful energy* which attended his doctrines, That *never man spake like this man*.—The *harvest* approaching, he reminds his disciples of a far more important harvest, *John iv. 35 Matth. xiii. 39.* when immortal be-

Emboldened by the kind acceptance of the preceding sketches, I beg leave to confide in the same *benevolence of taste*, for the protection and support of the two remaining Essays; which exhibit a prospect of *still life*, and *grand operation*; which moralize on the most composed, and most magnificent, appearances of things.—In which, *Fancy* is again suffered to introduce her imagery, but only as the handmaid of *Truth*, in order to dress her person, and display her charms; to engage the attention, and win the love, even of the *gay*, and of the *fashionable*. Which is more likely to be effected, by forming agreeable pictures of Nature, and deriving instructive observations, than by the laborious method of long-deduced arguments, or close-connected reasonings.—The contemplation of the heavens and the earth, of their admirable properties and beneficial changes, has always afforded the most exalted gratification to the human mind. In compliance with this prevailing taste, I have drawn my serious admonitions from the stupendous theatre, and variegated scenery, of the universe: that the reader may learn his duty from his very pleasures;—may gather *wisdom*, mingled with

ings shall be *reaped* from the grave, and *gathered in* from all the quarters of the earth; when every human creature shall sustain the character of valuable *wheat*, or despicable *tares*; and accordingly be lodged in mansions of everlasting security, or consigned over to the rage of unquenchable fire.—In his charge to *fishermen*, when they are commencing preachers, *Matth. iv. 19* he exhorts them, conformably to the nature of their late occupation, to use the same *assiduity* and *address* in winning souls, as they were wont to exercise in catching the finny prey.—For the farther illustration of this no less useful than curious subject, I would refer my reader to a valuable note, in Sir *Isaac Newton's* Observations on the Prophecies, p. 148 4to edition.

virtue, from the most refined *entertainments*, and noblest *delights*.

The *Evening*, drawing her sables over the world, and gently darkening into *Night*, is a season peculiarly proper for sedate consideration. All circumstances concur to hush our passions, and sooth our cares; to tempt our steps abroad, and prompt our thoughts to serious reflection.

————— Then is the time,
For those whom Wisdom and whom Nature charm,
To steal themselves from the degen'rate crowd,
And soar above this little scene of things;
To tread low-thoughted Vice beneath their feet;
To sooth the throbbing passions into peace;
And woo lone Quiet in her silent walks*.

The favour I would solicit for the *first* of the following compositions, is, That it may be permitted to attend, in such retired and contemplative excursions; to attend, if not under the character of a friend, at least, in the humble capacity of a servant, or a page:—as a *servant*, to open the door of meditation, and remove every impediment to those best exercises of the mind; which blend advantage with amusement, and improve while they delight:—as a *page*, to gather up the unstable, fluctuating, train of Fancy; and collect her fickle powers into a consistent, regular, and useful habit of thinking.

The *other*, conversant among the *starry regions*, would lead the imagination through those beautiful tracts of unclouded azure, and point out to the judgment some of those astonishing particulars, which so eminently signalize the celestial worlds. A prospect this, to which curiosity attracts our

* THOM. *Autumn*, line 973.

eyes, and to which Scripture itself often directs our study: A prospect beyond all others most excellently calculated to *enlarge* the soul, and *ennoble* its conceptions;—to give the grandest apprehensions of the *everlasting* GOD, and create sentiments of becoming superiority, with relation to all *transitory* interests;—in a word, to furnish *faith* with the surest foundation for a steady assiance, and true magnanimity of spirit; to afford *piety* the strongest motives both for a lively gratitude, and profound veneration.

While *Galileo* lifts his tube, and discovers the prodigious magnitude of those radiant orbs;—while *Newton* measures their amazing distances, and unites the whole system in harmonious order, by the subtile influences of attraction:—I would only, like the herald before that illustrious *Hebrew**, proclaim, at every turn, “*Bow the knee, and adore*” the almighty Maker; magnify his eternal name, “*and make his praise, like all his works, to be glorious.*”

* *Gen. xli. 43.*

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N. B. *It may seem unaccountable, to an unlearned reader, that astronomers should speak such amazing things; and speak them with such an air of assurance; concerning the distances and magnitudes, the motions and relations, of the heavenly bodies. I would desire such a person to consider the case of ECLIPSES, and with what exactness they are calculated. They are not only foretold, but the very instant of their beginning is determined. The precise time of their continuance is assigned; assigned, almost to the nicety of a moment; and what is still more surprising, for the space of hundreds or thousands of years to come.—As this is a matter of fact, absolutely indisputable; it is also a very obvious, yet solid demonstration, that the principles of science, on which those calculations proceed, are not mere conjecture, or precarious supposition; but have a real, a certain foundation, in the nature and constitution of things.*

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CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

N I G H T.

Night is fair *Virtue's* immemorial friend :
The conscious *Moon*, through ev'ry distant age,
Has held a lamp to *Wisdom*.

Night-Thoughts, N^o V.

THE business of the day dispatched, and the sultry heats abated, invited me to the recreation of a walk ; a walk in one of the *finest recesses* of the country, and in one of the most *pleasant evenings* which the summer-season produced.

The limes and elms, uniting their branches over my head, formed a *verdant canopy*, and cast a most refreshing shade. Under my feet lay a *carpet* of Nature's *velvet* ; grass intermingled with moss, and embroidered with flowers. *Jesamines*, in conjunction with woodbines, twined around the trees, displaying their *artless beauties* to the eye, and diffusing their *delicious sweets* through the air. On either side, the boughs, rounded into a set of regular arches, opened a view into the *distant fields*, and presented me with a prospect of the *bending skies*. The little

birds, all joyous and grateful for the favours of the light, were paying their acknowledgments in a *tribute of harmony*, and soothing themselves to rest with songs. While a French-horn, from a neighbouring seat, sent its melodious accents, softened by the length of their passage, to complete the *concert of the grove*.

Roving in this agreeable manner, my thoughts were exercised on a subject still more agreeable than the season, or the scene; I mean, our late *signal victory* over the united forces of intestine treason, and foreign invasion: a victory, which pours joy through the present age, and will transmit its influence to generations yet unborn.—Are not all the blessings, which can endear society, or render life itself desirable, centered in our present happy constitution, and auspicious government? Were they not *all* struck at, by that impious and horrid blow, meditated at *Rome*, levelled by *France*, and seconded by factious spirits at *home*? Who then can be sufficiently thankful for the gracious interposition of Providence, which has not only averted the impending ruin, but turned it, with aggravated confusion, on the authors of our troubles?

Methinks, every thing *valuable* which I possess, every thing *charming* which I behold, conspire to enhance this ever-memorable event. To this it is owing, that I can ramble unmolested along the vale of private life, and taste all the innocent satisfactions of a *contemplative* retirement.—Had Rebellion succeeded in her

detestable designs*; instead of walking with security and complacency in these flowery paths, I might have met the *assassin* with his *dagger*; or have been obliged to abandon my habitation, and “embrace the rock for a shelter.”—Farewell then, ye fragrant shades; seats of meditation, and calm repose! I should have been driven from your loved retreats, to make way for some barbarous, some *insulting victor*.—Farewell then, ye pleasing toils, and wholesome amusements of my rural hours! I should no more have reared the tender flower to the sun; no more have taught the espalier to expand her boughs; nor have fetched, any longer, from my kitchen-garden, the purest supplies of health.

Had Rebellion succeeded in her detestable designs; instead of being regaled with the *music* of the *woods*, I might have been alarmed with the sound of the trumpet, and all the thunder of war. Instead of being entertained with this *beautiful landscape*, I might have beheld our houses ransacked, and our villages plundered; I might have beheld our fenced cities encompassed with armies, and our fruitful fields “clothed with desolation;” or have been shocked with the more frightful images of “garments rolled in blood,” and of a ruffian’s blade reeking from a brother’s heart. Instead of Peace, with her cheering olives, sheltering our

* Referring to the Rebellion, set on foot in the year 1745;—which, for several months, made a very alarming progress in the North;—but was happily extinguished by the glorious and decisive victory at *Culloden*.

abodes; instead of Justice, with her impartial scale, securing our goods; *Persecution* had brandished her sword, and *Slavery* clanked her chains.

Nor are these miseries imaginary only, or the creatures of a groundless panic. There are, in a neighbouring kingdom, who very lately experienced them in all their rigour*. And, if the *malignant* spirit of *Popery* had forced itself into our church; if an *abjured Pretender* had cut his way to our throne; we could have no reason to expect a mitigation of their severity, on our behalf.—But, supposing the tender mercies of a bigotted usurper to have been somewhat less cruel; where, alas! would have been the encouragement to cultivate our little portion; or what pleasure could arise from an improved spot; if both the one and the other lay, every moment, at the mercy of *lawless* power? This embittering circumstance would spoil their relish; and, by rendering them a *precarious*, would render them a *joyless*, acquisition.—In vain might the vine spread her purple clusters; in vain be lavish of her generous juices; if *Tyranny*, like a ravenous harpy, should be always hovering over the bowl, and ready to snatch it from the lip of Industry, or to wrest it from the hand of Liberty.

* See a pamphlet, entitled *Popery always the same*;—which contains a narrative of the *persecutions* and severe hardships, lately suffered by the *Protestants* in the southern parts of *France*; and closes with a most seasonable, alarming, and spirited address, to the inhabitants of *Great Britain*. Printed 1746.

LIBERTY, that dearest of names ; and *Property*, that best of charters, give an additional and inexpressible charm to every delightful object.—See, how the declining sun has beautified the *western clouds*; has arrayed them in crimson, and skirted them with gold. Such a refinement of our domestic bliss is *property*; such an improvement of our public privileges is *liberty*.—When the lamp of day shall withdraw his beams, there will still remain the same collection of floating vapours; but, O! how changed, how gloomy! The carnation-streaks are faded; the golden edgings are worn away; and all the lovely tinges are lost, in a *leaden-coloured* louring sadness. *Such* would be the aspect of all these scenes of beauty, and all these abodes of pleasure, if exposed continually to the caprice of arbitrary sway, or held in a state of abject and cringing dependence.

The sun has almost finished his daily race, and hastens to the goal. He descends lower and lower, till his chariot-wheels seem to hover on the utmost verge of the sky. What is somewhat remarkable, the orb of light, upon the point of setting, grows considerably *broad*er. The shadows of objects, just before they become blended in undistinguishable darkness, are exceedingly *lengthened**.—Like blessings, little prized while *possessed*; but highly esteemed the very instant they are preparing for their flight; bitterly regretted when once they are gone, and to be seen no more.

* “*Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.*” *VIRG.*

The radiant globe is, now, half immersed beneath the dusky earth ; or, as the ancient poets speak, is shooting into the ocean, and sinks in the western sea.—And could I view the *sea* at this juncture, it would yield a most amusing and curious spectacle. The rays, striking horizontally on the liquid element, give it the appearance of floating glass ; or, reflected in many a different direction, form a beautiful multiplicity of colours.—A stranger, as he walks along the sandy beach, and, lost in pensive attention, listens to the murmurings of the restless flood, is agreeably alarmed by the *gay decorations* of the surface. With entertainment, and with wonder, he sees the curling waves, here glistering with white, there glowing with purple ; in one place wearing an azure tincture ; in another, glancing a cast of undulating green ; in the whole exhibiting a piece of *fluid scenery*, that may vie with yonder pensile tapestries, though wrought in the loom, and tinged with the dyes of heaven.

While I am transported by fancy to the shores of the ocean, the great luminary is sunk beneath the horizon, and totally disappears. The whole face of the ground is overspread with shades ; or, with what one of the finest painters of Nature calls, a *dun obscurity*. Only a few very superior eminences are tipt with streaming silver. The tops of groves, and lofty towers, catch the *last smiles* of day *, are still irradiated by the

* See this remarkable appearance delicately described, and wrought into a comparison, which, in my opinion, is

departing beams.—But, O! how transient is the distinction; how momentary the gift! Like all the blessings, which mortals enjoy below, it is *gone* almost as soon as *granted*. See! how languishingly it trembles on the leafy spire; and glimmers, with a dying faintness, on the mountain's brow. The little vivacity that remains, decays every moment. It can no longer hold its station. While I speak it expires; and resigns the world to the gradual approaches of night.

——— Now *Twilight* grey
Had in her sober liv'ry all things clad*.

Every object, a little while ago, glared with light; but now all appears under a more qualified lustre. The animals harmonize with the insensible creation; and, what was *gay* in those, as well as *glittering* in this, gives place to an universal *gravity*. In the meadows, all was jocund and sportive; but now the gamesome lambs are grown weary of their frolics, and the tired shepherd has imposed silence on his pipe. In the branches all was sprightliness and song; but now the lively green is wrapt in the descending glooms; and no tuneful airs are heard, only the plaintive stock-dove, cooing mournfully through the grove.—Should I now be vain and trifling, the heavens and the earth would rebuke my unseasonable levity. Therefore, be these moments devoted to thoughts

one of the most just, beautiful, and noble pieces of imagery, to be found in modern poetry. *Night-Thoughts*, N° II. p. 41. 4to edit.

* MILT. *Par. Lost*. B. IV. line 598.

sedate as the closing day, *solemn* as the face of things. And, indeed, however my social hours are enlivened with innocent pleasantries, let every evening, in her sable habit, toll the bell to serious consideration. Nothing can be more proper, for a person who walks on the borders of eternity, and is hastening continually to his final audit; nothing more proper, than daily to slip away from the circle of amusements, and frequently to relinquish the hurry of business, in order to consider and adjust "the things that belong to his peace."

SINCE the sun is departed, from whence can it proceed that I am not involved in pitchy darkness? Whence these remainders of *diminished brightness*? which, though scarcely forming a refulgence, soften and sooth the horrors of night. I see not the shining ruler, yet am cheered with a real, though faint, communication of his splendour.—Does he remember us, in his progress through other climes? Does he send a *detachment* of his rays to *escort* us during his personal absence; or to *cover* (if I may use the military term) our *retreat* from the scene of action? Has he bequeathed us a dividend of his beams, sufficient to render our circumstances easy, and our situation agreeable? till Sleep pours its soft oppression on the organs of sense; till Sleep suspends all the operations of our hands, and entirely supersedes any farther occasion for the light.

No: it is ill judged and unreasonable, to ascribe this beneficent conduct to the sun. Not

unto him, not unto him ; but unto his *almighty Maker*, we are obliged for this pleasing attendant, this valuable legacy. The gracious Author of our being has so disposed the collection of circumambient air, as to make it productive of this fine and wonderful effect. The sun-beams, falling on the higher parts of the æreal fluid, instead of passing on in straight lines, are bent inwards, and conducted to our sight. Their natural course is over-ruled, and they are bidden to wheel about, on purpose to favour us with a welcome and salutary visit.—By which means, the blessing of light, and the season of business, are considerably prolonged ; and, what is a very endearing circumstance, prolonged most considerably when the vehement heats of summer incline the *student* to postpone his walk till the temperate evening prevails ; when the important labours of the-harvest call the *husbandman* abroad before the day is fully risen.

AFTER all the ardours of the sultry day, how reviving is this *coolness* !—This gives new verdure to the fading plants, new vivacity to the withering flowers, and a more exquisite fragrance to their mingled scents.—By this, the air also receives a new force, and is qualified to exert itself with greater activity : qualified to brace our limbs ; to heave our lungs ; and cooperate, with a brisker impulse, in perpetuating the circulation of our blood.—This I might call the grand *alembic* of Nature ; which distils her most sovereign *cordial*, the refreshing *dews*. Incessant heat would rob us of their beneficial

agency; and oblige them to evaporate, in imperceptible exhalations. Turbulent winds, or even the gentler motions of *Aurora's* fan, would dissipate the rising vapours, and not suffer them to form a coalition. But, favoured by the stillness, and condensed by the coolness, of the night, they unite in pearly drops, and create that *finely tempered* humidity, which cheers the vegetable world, as sleep exhilarates the animal.

Not unlike to these are the advantages of *solitude*. The world is a troubled ocean; and who can erect stable purposes on its fluctuating waves? The world is a school of wrong; and who does not feel himself warping to its pernicious influences*? On this sea of glass†, how insensibly we slide from our own steadfastness! Some sacred *truth*, which was struck in lively characters on our souls, is obscured, if not obliterated. Some worthy *resolution*, which Heaven had wrought in our breasts, is shaken, if not overthrown. Some enticing *vanity*, which we had solemnly renounced, again practises its wiles, and again captivates our affections. How often has an unwary glance kindled a fever of irregular desire in our hearts! How often has a word of applause dropt luscious poison into our ears; or some disrespectful expression raised a gust of passion in our bosoms? Our innocence is of so *tender* a constitution, that it suffers in the promiscuous crowd. Our purity is of so

* "Nunquam a turba mores, quos extuli, refero. Aliquid, ex eo quod composui, turbatur: aliquid, ex his quae fugavi, redit. Inimica est multorum conversatio." SEN.

† Rev. xv. 2.

delicate a complexion, that it scarce touches on the world without contracting a stain. We see, we hear, with peril.

But here *safety* dwells. Every meddling and intrusive avocation is secluded. Silence holds the door against the strife of tongues, and all the impertinencies of idle conversation. The busy swarm of vain images, and cajoling temptations, which beset us, with a buzzing importunity, amidst the gaieties of life, are chased by these thickening shades.—Here I may, without disturbance, commune with my own heart; and learn that best of sciences, to *know myself*. Here the soul may rally her dissipated powers, and grace recover its native energy.—This is the opportunity to rectify every evil impression; to expel the poison, and guard against the contagion, of corrupting examples. This is the place where I may, with advantage, apply myself to subdue the *rebel within*; and be master, not of a sceptre, but of myself.—Throng then, ye ambitious, the levees of the powerful; I will be punctual in my assignations with Solitude. To a mind intent upon its own improvement, solitude has charms incomparably more engaging than the *entertainments* presented in the theatre, or the *honours* conferred in the drawing-room.

I SAID, solitude.—Am I then *alone*?—'Tis true, my acquaintance are at a distance. I have stole away from company, and am remote from all *human* observation.—But that is an alarming thought,

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Millions of *spiritual* creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep*.

Perhaps, there may be numbers of those *invisible beings* patrolling this same retreat ; and joining with me, in contemplating the Creator's works. Perhaps those *ministering spirits*, who rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, and hold up the goings of the righteous, may follow us to the lonely recess ; and, even in our most solitary moments, be our constant *attendants*.—What a pleasing awe is awakened by such a reflection ! How venerable it renders my retired walks ! I am struck with reverence, as under the roof of some *sacred edifice*, or in the *presence-chamber* of some mighty monarch.—O ! may I never bring any pride of imagination, nor indulge the least dissolute affection, where such refined and exalted intelligences exercise their watch !

'Tis possible, that I am encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses ; but it is certain that God, the *infinite eternal* GOD, is now and ever with me. The great JEHOVAH, before whom all the angelic armies bow their heads, and veil their faces, surrounds me ; supports me ; pervades me. “ In HIM I live, move, and have my “ being.”—The whole world is his august temple ; and, in the most sequestered corner, I appear before his adorable Majesty, no less than when I worship in his house, or kneel at his altar. In every place, therefore, let me pay him the homage of a heart cleansed from idols, and devoted to his service. In every circum-

* MILT. *Par. Lost*. B. IV. line 677.

stance, let me feel no *ambition*, but to *please* him; nor covet any *happiness*, but to *enjoy* him.

How sublime is the description, and how striking the sentiment, in that noble passage of the Psalms! *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I climb up into the heights of heaven, thou art there inthroned in light. If I go down to the depths of the grave, thou art there also in thy pavilion of darkness. If I retire to the remotest eastern climes, where the morning first takes wing: if, swifter than the darting ray, I pass to the opposite regions of the west, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea*: shall I, in that distant situation, be beyond thy reach; or, by this sudden transiotion escape thy notice! So far from it, that could I, with once glance of thought, transport myself beyond all the bounds of creation, I should still be encircled with the immensity of thy essence; or rather, still be inclosed in the hollow of thy hand — Awful, yet delightful truth! Let it be interwoven with every thought! and become one with the very consciousness of my existence! that I may continually *walk with GOD*, and conduct myself, in every step of my behaviour, “as seeing *HIM that is invisible.*”*

* *Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9.* There is, I think, an additional strength and beauty in the thought, if, with the learned Mr. *Judge*, we suppose an *antithesis* between the two clauses of the last verse, as there evidently is between those of the preceding; and that they express, in a poetical style, the extremities of the *East* and the *West*.

30 CONTEMPLATIONS

They are the happy persons ; felicity, true felicity, is *all their own* ; who live under an habitual sense of GOD's omnipresence, and a sweet persuasion of his special love. If dangers threaten, their impregnable defence is at hand. Nothing can be so near to terrify, as their almighty Guardian to secure them.—To these the hours can never be *tedious* ; and it is impossible for them to be *alone*. Do they step aside from the occupations of animal life ? A more exalted set of employments engage their attention. They address themselves, in all the various acts of devotion, to their heavenly Father ; *who now sees in secret, and will hereafter reward them openly*. They spread all their wants before his indulgent eye, and disburden all their sorrows into his compassionate bosom. Do they withdraw from human society ? They find themselves under the more immediate regards of their Maker. If they resign the satisfactions of social intercourse, it is to cultivate a correspondence with the condescending DEITY, and taste the pleasures of divine friendship.—What is such a *state*, but the very suburbs of heaven ? What is such a *conduct*, but an antepast of eternal blessedness ?

Now, my soul, the day is *ended*. The hours are all fled. They are fled to the supreme Judge, and have given in their ; evidence an evidence registered in heaven ! and to be produced at the great audit.—Happy *they* whose improvement has kept pace with the fleeting minutes ; who have seized the important fugitives, and

engaged them in the pursuit of *wisdom*, or devoted them to the service of *virtue*.

Fugitives indeed they are. Our moments slip away silently and insensibly. The thief steals not more unperceived from the pillaged house.—And will the runagates never stop? No: wherever we are, however employed, Time pursues his incessant course. Though *we* are listless and dilatory; the great measurer of our days presses on: still presses on, in his unwearyed career*; and whirls our weeks, and months, and years, away.—Is it not then surprisingly strange to hear people complain of the *tediousness* of their time, and how *heavy* it hangs upon their hands? to see them contrive a variety of amusing artifices to accelerate its flight, and get rid of its burden?—Ah! thoughtless mortals! Why need you urge the headlong torrent? Your days are swifter than a *post*; which, carrying dispatches of the last importance, with unremitted speed scours the road. They pass away like the nimble *ships*; which have the wind in their wings, and skim along the watery plain. They hasten to their destined period with the rapidity of an *eagle*; which leaves the stormy blast behind her, while she leaves the air, and darts upon her prey†.

* “Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus.” VIRG.

† *Job* ix. 25, 26. By these three very expressive images, the inspired poet represents the *uninterrupted* and *rapid* flight of time. The passage is illustrated with great judgment, and equal delicacy, in Dr. Grey's most ingenious abridgement of *Schultens*.—“Quæ tribus in elementis velocissima, hic admirabili cum emphasi congeruntur. In terris, nil

Now the day is gone, how *short* it appears! When my fond eye beheld it in *perspective*, it seemed a very considerable space. Minutes crowded upon minutes, and hours ranged behind hours, exhibited an extensive draught, and flattered me with a long progression of pleasures. But, upon a *retrospective* view, how wonderfully is the scene altered! the landscape, large and spacious, which a warm fancy drew, brought to the test of cool experience, shrinks into a span. Just as the shores vanish, and mountains dwindle to a spot, when the sailor, surrounded by skies and ocean, throws his last look on his native land.—How clearly do I now discover the cheat! May it never impose upon my unwary imagination again! I find there is nothing abiding on this side eternity. A *long* duration, in a state of *finite* existence, is mere illusion.

Perhaps the *healthy*, and the *gay*, may not readily credit the serious truth; especially from a young pen, and new to its employ. Let us then refer ourselves to the decision of the *ancient*. Ask some venerable old person, who is just marching off the mortal stage, *How many have been the days of the years of thy life* *? It was a monarch's question, and therefore can want no recommendation to the fashionable

"pernicius curfore, et quidem læti quid ferente. Rapidius
 "tamen adhuc undas, non secant, sed supervolant, navigiola
 "papyro contexta. Omnium rapidissime aërem grandibus
 "alis permittitur aquila, præcipiti lapsu ruens in prædam."
 * Gen. xlvii. 8. Heb. Bib.

world.—Observe, how he shakes his hoary locks, and, from a deep-felt conviction, replies; “*Four-score years* have finished their rounds, to furrow these cheeks, and clothe this head in snow. Such a term may seem long and large to inconsiderate youth: but, O! how short, how scanty, to one that has made the experiment! *Short*, as a gleam of transient sunshine; *scanty*, as the shadow that departeth. Methinks, it was but yesterday that I exchanged my childish sports for manly exercises; and now I am resigning them both for the sleep of death. As soon as we are born, we begin to draw to our *end*; and how small is the interval between the cradle and the tomb!”—O! may we believe this testimony of mature age! May every evening bring it with clearer evidence to our minds! And may we form such an estimate of the little pittance, while it is upon the advancing hand, as we shall certainly make, when the sands are all run down!

Let me add one reflection on the *work* to be done, while this shuttle is flying through the loom*. A work of no small difficulty, yet of the utmost consequence!—Hast thou not seen, hast thou not known, the excellent of the earth, who were living images of their Maker? His *divine likeness* was transfused into their hearts, and beamed forth in all their conduct; beamed forth in meekness of wisdom, and purity of affection; in all the tender offices of love, and

* *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle.* Job vii. 6.

all the noble efforts of zeal. To be stamped with the same beautiful signature, and to be followers of them, as they were of CHRIST; *this, this is thy business*. On the accomplishment of this thy eternal *all* depends. And will an affair of such unspeakable weight admit of a moment's delay, or consist with the least remissness?—Especially, since much of thy appointed time is already elapsed; and the remainder is *all uncertainty*, save only that it is in the very act to fly.—Or suppose, thou hadst made a covenant with the grave, and wast assured of reaching the age of *Methuselah*; how soon would even such a lease expire!—Extend it, if you please, still farther; and let it be *co-existent* with nature itself. How inconsiderable is the addition! For yet a very little while, and the commissioned archangel lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by the almighty Name, *That time shall be no longer* *. Then *abused* opportu-

* This alludes to the beginning of *Revelations* the xth; which, abstracted from its spiritual meaning, and considered only as a stately *piece of machinery*, well deserves our attention; and, I will venture to say, has not its superior, perhaps not its equal, in any of the most celebrated masters of *Greece and Rome*.—All that is gloomy or beautiful in the atmosphere, all that is striking or magnificent in every element, is taken to heighten the idea. Yet nothing is disproportionate; but an uniform air of ineffable majesty greatens, exalts, ennobles the whole.—Be pleased to observe the *aspect* of this august personage. All the brightness of the sun shines in his countenance; and all the rage of the fire burns in his feet.—See his *apparel*. The clouds compose his robe, and the drapery of the sky floats upon his shoulders. The rainbow forms his diadem; and that which “compasseth the heaven with a glorious circle,” is

nities will never return ; and *new* opportunities will never more be offered. Then, should negligent mortals wish—wish ever so passionately—for a few hours—a few moments only—to be thrown back from the opening eternity ; *thousands* of worlds would not be able to procure the grant.

Shall I now be industrious to shorten what is no longer than a span, or to quicken the pace of what is ever on the wing ? Shall I squander away what is *unutterably important* while it lasts : and, when once departed, is *altogether irrevocable* ? O ! my soul, forbear the folly ; for-

the ornament of his head.—Behold his *attitude*. One foot stands on the ocean, the other rests on the land. The wide-extended earth, and the world of waters, serve as pedestals for those mighty columns.—Consider the *action*. His hand is lifted up to the height of the stars. He speaks ; and the regions of the firmament echo with the mighty accents, as the midnight-desert resounds with the lion's roar. The artillery of the skies is discharged at the signal ; a peal of sevenfold thunders spreads the alarm, and prepares the universe to receive his orders.—To finish all, and give the highest grandeur, as well as the utmost solemnity, to the representation, hear the *decree* that issues from his mouth. He *swears by HIM that liveth for ever and ever*. In whatever manner so majestic a person had expressed himself, he could not fail of commanding universal attention : but when he confirms his speech by a most sacred and inviolable oath, we are not only wrapt in silent suspense, but overwhelmed with the profoundest awe.—He swears, *That time shall be no longer*. Was ever voice so full of terror ; so big with wonder ? It proclaims, not the fall of empires, but the final period of things. It strikes off the wheels of Nature ; bids ages and generations cease to roll ; and, with one potent word, consigns a whole world over to dissolution.—This is one among a multitude of very sublime and *masterly strokes*, to be found in that too-much neglected book—the BIBLE.

bear the desperate extravagance. Wilt thou chide as a loiterer, the arrow that boundeth from the string; or sweep away diamonds, as the refuse of thy house?—Throw time away! Astonishing, ruinous, irreparable profuseness! Throw empires away, and be blameless. But, O! be parsimonious of thy days; husband thy precious hours. They go connected, indissolubly connected, with heaven or hell *. *Improved*, they are a sure pledge of everlasting glory; *wasted* they are a sad preface to never-ending confusion and anguish.

WHAT a *profound silence* has composed the world! So profound is the silence, that my very breath seems a noise; the ticking of my watch is distinctly heard; if I do but stir, it creates a disturbance.—There is now none of that confused din from the tumultuous city; no voice of jovial rustics from the neighbouring meadow; no chirping melody from the shady thicket.—Every lip is sealed. Not the least whisper invades the air; nor the least motion rustles among the boughs. *Echo* herself sleeps unmolested. The

* I remember to have seen, upon a sun-dial, in a physician's garden at Northampton, the following inscription; which, I think, is the most *proper motto* for the instrument that measures our time, and the most *striking admonition* that can possibly be presented to every eye.

AB HOC MOMENTO PENDET ÆTERNITAS.

The weighty sense of which, I know not how to express in *English*, more happily than in those words of Dr. Watts:

Good GOD! on what a *slender thread*
[Or, on what a *moment of time*]
Hang everlasting things!

expanded ear, though all attention, catches no sound, but the liquid lapse of a distant murmuring stream.

All things are hush'd, as Nature's self lay dead.

If, in the midst of this deep and universal composure, ten thousand bellowing thunders should burst over my head, and rend the skies with their united volleys; how should I bear so *unexpected a shock*? It would stun my senses, and confound my thoughts. I should shudder in every limb; perhaps sink to the earth with terror.—Consider then, O mortals! consider the much more *prodigious* and *amazing* call, which will, ere long, alarm your sleeping bones. When the tenants of the tomb have slumbered, in the most undisturbed repose, for a multitude of ages; what an inconceivable consternation must the *shout* of the *archangel*, and the *trump* of God, occasion! Will it not wound the ear of the ungodly; and affright, even to distraction, the impenitent sinner? The stupendous peal will sound through the vast of heaven; will shake the foundations of nature; and pierce even the deepest recesses of the grave. And how—O! how will the prisoners of divine justice be able to endure that tremendous *summons* to a far more tremendous tribunal?—Do thou, my soul, listen to the *still voice* of the gospel. Attend, in this thy day, to the gracious invitations of thy Saviour. Then shall that great midnight-cry lose its *horror*, and be *music* in thy ears. It shall be welcome to thy reviving clay, as the tidings of liberty to the dungeon-captive; as

the year of jubilee to the harassed slave. This, this shall be its charming import; "*Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust**.

WHAT a general *cessation* of *affairs* has this dusky hour introduced! A little while ago, all was hurry, hurry. Life and Activity exerted themselves in a thousand busy forms. The city swarmed with passing and repassing multitudes. All the country was sweat and dust. The air floated in perpetual agitation, by the flitting birds, and humming bees. *Art* sat prying with her piercing eyes; while *Industry* plied her restless hands.—But see, how all this fervent and impetuous bustle is fled with the setting sun. The beasts are slunk to their grassy couch; and the winged people are retired to their downy nests. The hammer has resigned its sounding task, and the file ceases to repeat its flying touches. Shut is the well-frequented shop, and its threshold no longer worn by the feet of numerous customers. The village-swain lies drowned in slumbers; and even his trusty dog, who, for a considerable time, stood centry at the door, is extended at his ease, and snores with his master.—In every place *Toil* reclines her head, and *Application* folds her arms. All interests seem to be forgot; all pursuits are suspended; all employment is sunk away, sunk away with those fluttering myraids, which lately sported in the sun's departing rays.—'Tis like the sabbath of universal Nature; or as though the pulse of life stood still.

* *Isa. xxvi. 19.*

Thus it will be with our infinitely momentous concerns, when once *the shadows of the evening* (that long evening which follows the footsteps of Death!) *are stretched over us*. The dead cannot seek unto God; the living, the living alone, are possessed of this inestimable opportunity*. “There is no work or device, no repentance or amendment, in the grave, whither we all are hasting†.” When once that *closing scene* is advanced, we shall have no other

* —“Nunc, nunc properandus, et acri

“Fingendus sine fine rota.” —

PERS.

Behold! now is the accepted time; Behold! now is the day of salvation. 2 Cor. vi. 2.

“Haste, haste, he lies in wait, he’s at the door,

“Insidious Death! should his strong hand arrest,

“No composition sets the pris’ner free.” i

† They who are gone down to the grave, are represented (Isa. xxxviii. 11.) by the phrase, *רִשְׁבֵי חֲדָל*—rendered by Vitringa, *Those that inhabit the land of intermission or cessation*.—Which prevents all appearance of tautology in the sentence; and is, I think, a valuable improvement of the translation; as it conveys an idea, not only distinct from the preceding, but of a very poetical and very affecting nature; such as was perfectly natural for the Royal singer, and Royal sufferer to dwell upon, in his desponding moments.—Thus interpreted, the sense will run; “I shall see man no more; I shall be cut off from the cheerful ways of men, and all the sweets of human society. And, what is a farther aggravation of the threatened stroke, I shall, by its taking place, be numbered with those that inherit the land of cessation and inactivity; where there will be no more possibility of contributing to the happiness of my kingdom, no more opportunity of advancing my Creator’s glory, or of making my own final salvation sure.”—A sentiment like *this* is grand, important, and full of benevolence; removes all suspicion of unbecoming pusillanimity, and does the highest honour to the monarch’s character.

part to act on this *earthly theatre*. Then, the sluggard, who has slumbered away life in a criminal inactivity, must lie down in hopeless distress, and everlasting sorrow. Then that awful doom will take place, "He that is *holy*, let him be holy still; and he that is *filthy*, let him be filthy for ever."

Is it so, my soul? Is this the *only, only* time allotted for obtaining the great reward, and making thy salvation sure? And art thou lulled in a *vain security*, or dreaming in a *supine inadvertency*? Start, O! start from thy trance. Gird up the loins of thy mind, and work while it is day. Improve the present seed-time, that eternity may yield a joyful harvest.—We especially, who are watchmen in *Israel*, and ministers of the glorious gospel; may *we* be awakened, by this consideration, to all assiduity in our holy office. Some or other of *our people* are ever and anon departing into the invisible state; all *our friends* are making incessant approaches to their long home; and we *ourselves* shall very shortly be transmitted to the confinement of the tomb. *This* is the favourable juncture, wherein alone we can contribute to their endless welfare. This is the crisis, the all-important *crisis*, of their final felicity. Instantly, therefore, let us pour in our wholesome instructions; instantly let us ply them with our earnest exhortations. A moment's delay may be an irreparable loss; may be irretrievable ruin. While we procrastinate, a fatal stroke may intervene; and place *us* beyond the power of administering, or place

them beyond all possibility of receiving, any spiritual good*.

HOW frequently is the face of Nature *changed!* and, by changing, made more *agreeable!* —The long-continued glitter of the day renders the soothing shades of the evening doubly welcome. Nor does the morn ever purple the east with so engaging a lustre, as after the gloom of a dark and dismal night. —At present, a *calm* of tranquillity is spread through the universe. The weary winds have forgot to blow. The gentle gales have fanned themselves asleep. Not so much as a single leaf nods. Even the quivering aspen rests. *And not one breath curls over the stream.* —Sometimes, on the contrary, the *tempest* summons all the forces of the air; and pours itself, with resistless fury, from the angry north. The whole atmosphere is tossed into tumultuous confusion, and the watery world is heaved to the clouds. The astonished mariner, and his straining vessel, now scale the rolling mountain, and hang dreadfully visible on the broken surge; now shoot, with headlong impetuosity, into the yawning gulf; and neither hulk nor mast is seen. The storm sweeps over the continent; raves along the city-streets; struggles through the forest-boughs; and ter-

* The case represented by the prophet (1 Kings xx. 40.) seems perfectly applicable on this occasion. *As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.* So, while we are either *remiss* in our function, or laying ourselves out upon *inferior* cares, the people of our charge may be gone;—gone beyond the influence of our counsels, beyond the reach of our prayers;—gone into the *unchangeable* and eternal state.

rifies the savage nations with a howl, more wildly horrid than their own. The knotty oaks bend before the blast; their iron trunks groan; and their stubborn limbs are dashed to the ground. The lofty dome rocks; and even the solid tower totters on its basis.

Such variations are kindly contrived, and with an evident condescension to the fickleness of our taste. Because a perpetual repetition of the *same* objects would create satiety and *disgust*; therefore the indulgent Father of our race has diversified the universal scene, and bid every appearance bring with it the charm of novelty. — This circumstance is *beneficial*, as well as *entertaining*. Providence, ever gracious to mortals, ever intent upon promoting our felicity, has taken care to mingle, in the constitution of things, what is pleasing to our imagination with what is serviceable to our interests. The piercing winds, and rugged aspect of winter, render the balmy gales, and flowery scenes of spring, peculiarly delightful. At the same time, the keen frosts mellow the soil, and prepare it for the hand of Industry. The rushing rains impregnate the glebe, and fit it to become a magazine of plenty. The earth is a great *laboratory*; and *December's* cold collects the gross materials, which are *sublimated* by the refining warmth of *May*. The air is a pure elastic fluid; and were it always to remain in *this* motionless serenity, it would lose much of its active spring; was it never agitated by *those* wholesome concussions, it would contract a noisome, perhaps,

a pestilential taint. In which cases, our respirations, instead of purifying, would corrupt the vital juices; instead of supplying us with refreshment, would be a source of diseases! or every gasp we draw might be unavoidable death*. —How then should we admire, how should we adore, that happy union of benignity and wisdom; which, from a *variety* of dispensations, produces an *uniformity* of good? produces a perpetual succession of delights, and an uninterrupted series of advantages!

THE *darkness* is now at its height; and I can not but admire the obliging manner of its taking place. It comes not with a blunt and abrupt incivility, but makes gentle and respectful advances. A *precipitate* transition, from the splendours of day, to all the horrors of midnight, would be inconvenient and frightful. It

* Considering the immense quantity of coals, and other combustible materials, which are daily consumed, and evaporate into the air; considering the numberless steams, and clouds of smoke, which almost continually overwhelm populous cities;—the noisome exhalations, which arise from thronged infirmaries and loathsome jails, from stagnating lakes and putrid sens;—the variety of offensive and unwholesome effluvia, which proceed from other causes:—it is a very remarkable instance of a Providence, at once tenderly kind, and infinitely powerful, that mankind is not *asphyxiated* with stench; that the air is not *choked* with filth.—The air is the *common sewer*, into which ten thousand times ten thousand nuisances are incessantly discharged; yet it is preserved so *thoroughly clear*, as to afford the most transparent medium for vision: so *delicately undulatory*, as to transmit, with all imaginable distinctness, every diversity of sound; so *perfectly pure*, as to be the constant refiner of the fluids, in every animal that breathes.

would bewilder the traveller in his journey ; it would strike the creation with amazement ; and, perhaps, be pernicious to the organs of sight. Therefore the gloom rushes not upon us instantaneously, but increases by slow degrees ; and, sending *twilight* before as its *harbinger*, decently advertises us of its approach. By this means, we are neither alarmed nor incommoded by the change ; but are able to take all suitable and timely measures for its reception.—Thus graciously has Providence regulated, not only the *grand vicissitudes* of the seasons, but also the *common interchanges* of light and darkness, with an apparent reference to our comfort.

Now the fierce *inhabitants* of the *forest* forsake their dens. A thousand grim forms, a thousand growling monsters, pace the desert : death is in their jaws, while, stung with hunger, and athirst for blood, they roam their nightly rounds.—Unfortunate the *traveller*, who is overtaken by the night, in those dismal wilds ! How must he stand aghast at the mingled yell of ravenous throats, and lions roaring after their prey ! Defend him, propitious Heaven ! or else he must see his endearing spouse, and hail his native home no more !—Now the prowling wolf, like a murderous ruffian, dogs the shepherd's footsteps, and besets his bleating charge. The fox, like a crafty felon, steals to the thatched cottage, and carries off the feathered booty.

Happy for the world, were these the only destroyers that walk in darkness. But, alas !

there are savages in human shape, who, muffled in shades, infect the abodes of civilized life. The sons of *violence* make choice of this season*, to perpetrate the most outrageous acts of wrong and robbery. The *adulterer* waiteth for the twilight; and, baser than the villain on the highway, betrays the honour of his bosom-friend. Now *Faction* forms her close cabals, and whispers her traiterous insinuations. Now *Rebellion* plans her accursed plots, and prepares the train to blow a nation into ruin. Now crimes, which hide their odious heads in the day, haunt the seats of society, and stalk through the gloom with audacious front. Now the *vermin* of the *stews* crawl from their lurking-holes, to wallow in sin, and spread contagion through the night: each soothing himself with the fond notion that all is safe; that no eye sees.

Are they then concealed? Preposterous madmen! to draw the curtain between their infamous practices and a little set of mortals! but lay them open to all these chaste and *wakeful eyes* of Heaven †! as though the moon and stars were made to light men to their revels, and not to GOD.—Are they then concealed? No, truly. Was every one of these vigilant luminaries closed; an *eye keener* than the lightning's flash, an *eye brighter* than ten thousand suns,

* ————— When night

Darkens the streets, than wander forth the sons
Of *Belial*, flown with insolence and wine. MILT.

† ——— “*Sed luna videt, sed sidera testes*
“*Intendunt oculos.*”

beholds their every motion. Their thickest shades are beaming day *, to the jealous Inspector, and supreme Judge of human actions.—Deluded creatures! have ye not heard, have ye not read, “ that clouds and darkness are HIS “ majestic residence † ? ” In that very gloom, to which you fly for covert, he erects his throne. What you reckon your *screen*, is the bar of his tribunal. O! remember this! stand in awe, and sin not. Remember, that the great and terrible God *is about your path ‡*, when you take your midnight-range; *is about your beds*, when you indulge the loose desire; *and spies out all your ways*, be they ever so secretly conducted, or artfully disguised.

SOME minutes ago, a passenger crossed along the road. His horse’s foot struck the ground, and fetched fire from a flint. My eye, though at a distance, caught the view; and saw, with *great clearness*, the transient sparkles; of which, had I been ever so near, I should not have discerned the *least glimpse*, under the blaze of day.—

* This is finely, and very forcibly expressed by the Psalmist: *If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me; then shall my night be turned to day; or, as it may be rendered somewhat more emphatically, Even the night shall be broad daylight all around me.* Psal. cxxxix. 10.

† Psal. xcvi. 2.

‡ The original words are much stronger than the translation *הסכנתה* and *ורית* signify, Thou *sistest* my path, and art *intimately acquainted with* all my ways. The former, I apprehend, denoting the *exact* cognizance which the Almighty taketh, the latter implying the *constant* inspection which he exerciseth, over all the circumstances of our conduct. Psal. cxxxix. 2.

So*, when sickness has drawn a *veil* over the gaiety of our hearts; when misfortunes have eclipsed the splendour of our outward circumstances; how many *important convictions* present themselves with the brightest evidence! Under the sunshine of prosperity, they lay undiscovered; but, when some intervening cloud has darkened the scene, they emerge from their obscurity, and even glitter upon our minds. Then the *World*, that delusive cheat, confesses her emptiness: but JESUS, the bright and morning Star, beams forth with inimitable lustre. Then, *Vice* loses all her fallacious allurements; that painted strumpet is horrible, as the hags of hell; but *Virtue*, despised virtue, gains loveliness from a luring Providence, and treads the shades with more than mortal charms.—May this reconcile me, and all the *sons of sorrow*, to our appointed share of suffering! If tribulation tend to dissipate the inward darkness, and pour heavenly day upon our minds; welcome distress; welcome disappointment; wel-

* I beg leave to inform the *young gentleman*, whose name dignifies my dedication, that *this* was a remark of his honoured *father*, when we rode together, and conversed in a dusky evening. I mention this circumstance, partly to secure the paragraph from contempt; partly to give him, and the world, an idea of that eminently serious taste which distinguished my deceased friend.—The *less obvious* the reflection, the more clearly it discovers a turn of mind remarkably spiritual; which would suffer nothing to escape, without yielding some religious improvement. The *meaner* the incident, the more admirable was that fertility of imagination, which could deduce the sublimest truths from the most trivial occurrences.

come whatever our froward flesh, or peevish passions, would *miscall* calamities. *These light afflictions, which are but for a moment*, shall sit easy upon our spirits; since they befriend our knowledge; promote our faith; and so “*work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* *.”

How has this darkness snatched every splendid and graceful object from my sight! It has dashed the sponge over the pictures of spring, and destroyed all the *delicate distinctions* of things. Where are now the fine tinges, which so lately charmed me from the glowing parterre! The blush is struck out from the cheeks of the rose, and the snowy hue is dropt from the lily. I cast my eyes toward a magnificent seat; but the aspiring columns, and fair expanded front, are mingled in rude confusion. Without the sun, all the elegance of the blooming world is a *mere blank*; all the symmetry of architecture is a *shapeless heap*.

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. The great Stephens, that oracle of Grecian learning, translates καθ' υπερβολην, *Quo nihil majus dici attingi potest*. But how does the sense rise! how is the idea enlarged, under two such forcible expressions! καθ' υπερβολην *εις υπερβολην*.—The whole verse is a masterpiece of the beautiful *antithesis*, the lively *description*, and the nervous *diction*. It is one of those exquisite passages in the inspired writings, which, like some rich *aromatic plants*, cannot be transferred from their own generous and native soil, without being impaired in their vivacity, and losing much of their delicacy. Perhaps, the following version may be somewhat less injurious to the sacred original, than the common translation;—*Our very light affliction, which is but just for the present moment, worketh out a far more exceeding, and incomparably great, and eternal weight of glory.*

Is not this an expressive emblem of the loveliness which the *Sun of Righteousness* transfuses into all that is amiable! Was it not for *JESUS*, and his merits, I should sigh with anguish of spirit; even while I rove through ranks of the most beautiful flowers, or breathe amidst a wilderness of sweets. Was it not for *JESUS*, and his merits, I should roam like some *disconsolate spectre*, even through the smiles of creation, and the caresses of Fortune. My conversation in this world, though dressed in the most engaging forms of external pleasure, would be like the passage of a *condemned malefactor*, through enamelled meadows, and bowers of bliss, to be broke upon the wheel, or to expire on the rack. But a daily reflection on the *LAMB's* atoning blood; a comfortable trust, that my soul is reconciled through this divine expiation; this is the ray, the golden ray, which irradiates the face of the universe. This is the *oil of beauty*, which makes all things wear a cheerful aspect; and the *oil of gladness*, which disposes the spectator to behold them with delight *. This, this, is the secret

* Thus applied, that fine piece of *flattery*, addressed to the *Heathen* emperor, is strictly and literally true.

———“ Vultus ubi tuus

“ Affulsit populo, gratior it dies,

“ Et soles melius nitent.”

HOR.

Which I would cast in a *Christian* mould, and thus translate:

When faith presents the Saviour's death,

And whispers, “ This is thine ;”

Sweetly my rising hours advance,

And peacefully decline.

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E

charm, which teaches Nature in all her prospects, and all her productions, so exquisitely to please.

“MAN goeth forth to his work, and to his labour, till the evening.” But then his strength fails; his spirits flag; and he stands in need, not only of some respite from toil, but of some kindly and sovereign refreshments.—What an admirable provision for this purpose is *sleep*! Sleep introduces a most welcome vacation, both for the soul and body. The exercises of the brain, and the labours of the hand, are at once discontinued. So that the *weary* limbs repair their exhausted vigour; while the *penfivè* thoughts drop their load of sorrows, and the *busy* ones rest from the fatigue of application.—Most reviving cordial! equally beneficial to our animal and intellectual powers. It supple the fleshly machine, and keeps all its nice movements in a proper posture for easy play. It animates the thinking faculties with fresh alacrity, and rekindles their ardour for the studies of the dawn. Without these enlivening recruits, how soon would the most robust constitution be wasted into a *walking skeleton*; and the most learned sage degenerate into a *hoary idiot*!—Some time ago, I beheld, with surprise, poor *Florio*. His air was wild; his countenance meagre; his thoughts roving, and speech disconcerted. Inquiring the cause of this strange alteration, I was informed, that, for several

While such my views, the radiant sun
Sheds a more sprightly ray;
Each object smiles; all nature charms:
I sing my cares away.

nights, he had not closed his eyes in sleep. For want of which *noble restorative*, that sprightly youth (who was once the life of the discourse, and the darling of the company) is become a spectacle of misery and horror.

How many of my fellow creatures are, at this very instant, confined to the bed of languishing; and complaining, with that illustrious sufferer of old, *Wearisome nights are appointed to me* *! Instead of indulging soft repose, they are counting the tedious hours; telling every striking clock; or measuring the very moments by their throbbing pulse. How many, harassed with pain, most passionately long to make some little truce with their agonies in peaceful slumbers! How many, sick with *disquietude*, and restless even on their downy pillows, would purchase this transient oblivion of their woes, almost at any rate!—That which wealth cannot procure, which multitudes sigh for in vain, thy God has bestowed on thee, times out of number. The *welcome visitant*, punctual at the needed hour, has entered thy chamber, and poured his poppies round thy couch; has gently closed thy eyelids, and shed his slumberous dews over all thy senses.

Since sleep is so absolutely necessary, so inestimably valuable, observe, what a *fine apparatus* almighty Goodness has made, to accommodate us with the balmy blessing. With how kind a precaution he removes whatever might obstruct its access, or impede its influence! He

* *Job* vii. 3.

draws around us the *curtain of darkness*; which inclines us to a drowsy indolence, and conceals every object that might too strongly agitate the sense. He conveys *peace* into our *apartments*; and imposes silence on the whole creation. Every animal is bidden to tread softly, or rather to cease from its motion, when man is retiring to his repose.—May we not discern, in this gracious disposition of things, the tender cares of a *nursing mother*; who hushes every noise, and secludes every disturbance, when she has laid the child of her love to rest? So, by such soothing circumstances, and gently-working opiates, *He giveth, to his beloved, sleep* *.

Another signal instance of a providence intent upon our welfare, is, that we are preserved *safe* in the hours of *slumber*. How are we then lost to all apprehension of danger, even though the murderer be at our bed-side, or his naked sword at our breast! Destitute of all concern for ourselves, we are unable to *think of*, much more to *provide for*, our own security. At these moments, therefore, we lie open to innumerable perils; perils from the resistless rage of flames; perils from the insidious artifices of thieves, or the outrageous violence of robbers; perils from the *irregular workings* † of

* *Psal.* cxxvii. 2.

† I think, it is referable only to a superintending and watchful *Providence*, that we are not hurried into the most *pernicious* actions, when our imagination is heated, and our reason stupefied by dreams — We have sometimes heard of unfortunate persons, who, walking in their sleep, have thrown themselves headlong from a window, and been

our own thoughts, and especially from the incursions of our spiritual enemy.

What dreadful mischief might that restless, that implacable, *adversary of mankind* work, was there not an invisible hand to control his rage, and protect poor mortals ! What scenes of horror might he represent to our imaginations, and " scare us with dreams, or terrify us with " visions * !" But the *Keeper of Israel*, who ne-
 dashed to death on the pebbles. And whence is it, that such disastrous accidents are only *related* as pieces of news, not experienced by ourselves, or our families ? Were *our* minds more sober in their operations, or more circumspect in their regards ? No, verily : nothing could be more wild than their excursions ; and none could be more inattentive to their own welfare. Therefore, if *we have laid us down, and slept* in peace ; it was, because the LORD vouchsafed us the sweet refreshment ; if *we rose again* in safety, it was, because the LORD *sustained* us with his unremitted protection.

Will the candid reader excuse me, if I add a short story ; or rather a *matter of fact*, suitable to the preceding remark ? — Two persons, who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream ; and, having run the whole circle of the chace, came, at last, to the tail of the stag. Upon this, he cries out with a determined ardour, *I'll kill him, I'll kill him* ; and immediately feels for the knife, which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to be awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger, and the moon shining into the room, he stood to view the event. When, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs, in the very place where, a moment before, the throat and the life of his friend lay. — This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of *others*, or murderers of *ourselves*, amidst the mad sallies of sleep ; only the *preventing care* of our heavenly Father.

* What a complete master that malignant spirit is in exhibiting *visitory representations*, appears from his conduct towards CHRIST, on the high mountain : and that he is

ver slumbers nor sleeps, interposes in our behalf; at once to *cherish* us under his wings, and to *defend* us as with a shield.—It is said of *Solomon*, “That threescore valiant men were about his bed; all expert in war; every one with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night*.” But one greater than *Solomon*, one mightier than myriads of armed hosts; even the great *JEHOVAH*, in whom is everlasting strength, he vouchsafes to *encamp about our houses*, to watch over our sleeping minutes, and to stop all the avenues of ill.—O! the unwearied and condescending goodness of our Creator! who *lulls* us to our *rest*, by bringing on the silent shades; and *plants* his own ever-watchful eye as our *centinel*, while we enjoy the needful repose.

REASON, now, resigns her sedate office; and *Fancy*, extravagant *Fancy*, leads the mind thro’ a maze of vanity. The head is crowded with false images, and tantalized with the most ridiculous misapprehensions of things. Some are expatiating amidst *Fairy fields*, and gathering garlands of visionary bliss; while their bodies are stretched on a wisp of straw, and sheltered by the cobwebs of a barn. Others, quite insensible of their rooms of state, are mourning in a doleful *dungeon*, or struggling with the raging billows. Perhaps, with hasty steps, they

too ready, if not restrained by an over-ruling power, to employ his dexterity in *afflicting mankind*, is evident from his treatment of *Job*. See *Luke* iv. 5. *Job* vii. 14.

* *Cant.* iii. 7, 8.

climb the craggy cliff; and, with real anxiety, fly from the imaginary danger. Or else, benumbed with sudden fear, and finding themselves unable to escape, they give up at once their hopes and their efforts; and, though reclined on a couch of ivory, are sinking, all helpless and distressed, in the furious whirlpool. So unaccountable are the *vagaries* of the *brain*, while Sleep maintains its dominion over the limbs!

But is this the only season, when absurd and incoherent irregularities play their magic on our minds? Are there not those who *dream*, even in their *waking* moments! Some pride themselves in a notion of superior excellency, because the royal favour has annexed a few splendid titles to their names; or because the dying silkworm has bequeathed her finest threads to cover their nakedness.—Others congratulate their own signal happiness, because loads of golden lumber are amassed together in their coffers; or promise themselves a most superlative felicity indeed, when some thousands more are added to the useless heap.—Nor are there wanting others, who gape after *substantial* satisfaction from *airy* applause; and flatter themselves with, I know not what, immortality in the momentary buz of renown.—Are any of these a whit more reasonable in their opinions than the poor ragged wretch in his reveries; who, while snoring under a hedge, exults in the possession of his stately palace, and sumptuous furniture?—If persons, who are *very vassals* to

their own *domineering* passions, and led captive by numberless temptations; if these persons pique themselves with a conceit of their liberty, and fancy themselves the *generous* and *gallant* spirits of the age: where is the difference between theirs and the madman's frenzy; who, though chained to the floor, is throned in thought, and wielding an imaginary sceptre? —In a word, as many as borrow their dignity from a plume of feathers, or the gaudy trappings of Fortune; as many as send their souls to seek for bliss in the blandishments of sense, or in any thing short of the divine favour, and a well-grounded hope of the incorruptible inheritance *; what are they but dreamers with their eyes open; *delirious*, though in *health*?

Would you see their picture drawn to the very life, and the success of their schemes calculated with the utmost exactness; cast your eye upon that fine representation exhibited by the prophet: *It shall be even as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite* †. Such is the race, and such the prize, of all those candidates for honour and joy, who run wide from the mark of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS. They live in vanity, and die in woe.—Awaken us, merciful LORD,

* These give a sacred, and home-felt delight,

A *sober* certainty of waking bliss.

MILT. *Comos.*

† *Isa.* xxix. 8.

from these *noontide trances*! Awaken us, while conviction may turn to our advantage, and not serve only to increase our torment. O! let our eyes be enlightened, to discern "the things that are excellent;" and no longer be imposed upon by fantastic appearances, which, however *gompous* they may seem, will prove more *empty* than the visions of the night, more *transient* than the dream that is forgotten.

HAVING mentioned sleep and dreams, let me once again consider those remarkable incidents of our frame; so very remarkable, that I may venture to call them a kind of experimental *mystery*, and little less than a standing *miracle*.—Behold the most *vigorous constitution*, when stretched on the bed of ease, and totally resigned to the slumbers of the night. Its activity is oppressed with fetters of indolence; its strength is consigned over to a temporary annihilation; the nerves are like a bow unstrung, and the whole animal system is like a motionless log.—Behold a person of the most *delicate sensations*, and *amiable dispositions*. His eyes, though thrown wide open, admit not the visual ray; at least, distinguish not objects. His ears, with the organs unimpaired, and articulate accents beating upon the drum, perceive not the sound; at least, apprehend not the meaning. The senses, and their exquisitely fine feelings, are overwhelmed with an unaccountable stupefaction. You call him a *social* creature; but where are his social affections? He knows not the father that begat him, and takes no notice

of the friend that is as his own soul. The wife of his bosom may expire by his side, and he lie more unconcerned than a barbarian. The children of his body may be tortured with the severest pangs; and he, even in the same chamber, remain untouched with the least commiseration.—Behold the most *ingenious scholar*; whose judgment is piercing, and able to trace the most intricate difficulties of science; his taste refined, and quick to relish all the beauties of sentiment and composition. Yet, at this juncture, the thinking faculties are unhinged, and the intellectual œconomy quite disconcerted. Instead of close-connected reasonings, nothing but a disjointed huddle of absurd ideas; instead of well-digested principles, nothing but a disorderly jumble of crude conceptions. The most palpable delusions impose upon his imagination. The whole night passes, and he frequently mistakes it for a single minute; is not sensible of the transition, hardly sensible of any duration.

Yet, no sooner does the morning dawn, and daylight enter the room; but this strange incantment vanishes. The man awakes, and finds himself possessed of all the valuable endowments, which, for several hours, were suspended, or lost. His sinews are braced, and fit for action. His senses are alert and keen. The romantic visionary brightens into the master of reason. The frozen or benumbed affections melt with tenderness, and glow with benevolence. And, what is beyond measure surprising

the intoxicated mind works itself sober ; not by *slow degrees*, but, in the *twinkling* of an eye, recovers from its perturbation.—Why does not the stupor, which deadens all the nice operations of the animal powers, hold fast its possession ? When the thoughts are once disadjusted, why are they not always in confusion ? How is it that they are rallied in a moment ; and, from the wildest irregularity, reduced to the most orderly array ?—From an inactivity resembling death, how is the body so *suddenly* restored to vigour and agility ! From extravagancies bordering upon madness ; how is the understanding *instantaneously* re-established in sedateness and harmony ?—Surely, “ this is the LORD’s doing, and it should be marvellous in our eyes ;” should awaken our gratitude, and inspirit our praise

THIS is the time in which *ghosts* are supposed to make their appearance. Now the *timorous imagination* teems with phantoms, and creates numberless terrors to itself. Now dreary forms, in sullen state, stalk along the gloom ; or, swifter than lightning, glide across the shades. Now voices more than mortal are heard from the echoing vaults, and groans issue from the hollow tombs *. Now melancholy spectres visit the ruins of ancient monasteries, and frequent the solitary dwellings of the dead. They pass and repass, in unsubstantial images, along the for-

* “ Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes

“ Ingens, et simulacra modis pallentia miris

“ Visa sub obscurum noctis.”——

VIRG.

faken galleries; or take their determined stand over some lamented grave.—How often has the schoolboy fetched a long circuit, and, trudged many a needless step, in order to avoid the haunted church-yard? Or, if necessity, sad necessity, has obliged him to cross the spot, where *human skulls* are lodged below, and the *baleful yews* shed supernumerary horrors above; a thousand hideous stories rush into his memory. Fear adds wings to his feet; he scarce touches the ground; dares not once look behind him; and blesses his good fortune, if no frightful sound purred at his heels, if no gaily shape bolted upon his sight.

'Tis strange to observe the excessive timidity which possesses many people's minds on this *fanciful occasion*; while they are void of all concern on others of the most *tremendous import*. Those who were startled, in any dark and lonely walk, at the *very apprehension* of a single spectre, are, nevertheless unimpressed at the sure *prospect* of entering into a whole world of disembodied beings; nay, are without any emotions of awe, though they know themselves to be hastening into the presence of the great, infinite, and eternal Spirit.—Should some pale messenger from the regions of the dead draw back our curtains at the hour of midnight; and appointing some particular place, say, as the horrid apparition to *Brutus, I'll meet thee there**:

* The story of *Brutus*, and his *evil genius*, is well known. Nor must it be denied, that the precise words of the spectre to the hero were, *I'll meet thee at Philippi*. But as this would not answer my purpose, I was obliged to make an alteration in the circumstance of place.

I believe the boldest heart would feel something like a panic; would seriously think upon the adventure, and be in pain for the event. But, when a voice from heaven cries, in the awakening language of the prophet, *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel* *; how little is the warning regarded! how soon is it forgot! Preposterous stupidity! to be *utterly unconcerned*, where it is the truest wisdom to take the alarm; and to be *all trepidation*, where there is nothing really terrible!—Do thou, my soul, remember thy Saviour's admonition; “*I will forewarn you, whom you shall fear. Fear not these imaginary horrors of the night: but fear that awful Being, whose revelation of himself, though with expressions of peculiar mercy, made Moses, his favourite servant, tremble exceedingly: whose manifestation, when he appears with purposes of inexorable vengeance, will make mighty conquerors, who were familiar with dangers, and estranged to dismay, call upon the mountains to fall on them, and the rocks to cover them! the menace of whose majestic eye, when he comes attended with thousand thousands of his immortal hosts, will make the very heavens cleave asunder, and the earth flee away.—O! dread HIS displeasure; secure HIS favour; and then thou mayst commit all thy other anxieties to the wind; thou mayst laugh at every other fear.*”

This brings to my mind a memorable and

* *Amos iv. 12.*

amazing occurrence, recorded in the book of *Job**; which is, I think, no inconsiderable proof of the *real existence* of apparitions†, on some *very extraordinary* emergencies; while it dis- countenances those legions of idle tales, which superstition has raised, and credulity received. Since it teaches us, that if, at any time, those visitants from the unknown world render themselves perceivable by mortals, it is not upon any errand of frivolous consequence, but to convey *intelligences* of the utmost moment, or to work *impressions* of the highest advantage.

* *Job* iv. 12, 14. &c.

† *Proof of the real existence of apparitions.*—If the sense in which I have always understood this passage be true—*Eliphaz*, I apprehend, was neither in a trance, nor in a dream, but perfectly awake.—Though he speaks of sleep; he speaks of it, as fallen not upon *himself*, but upon *other* men. He does not mention *dreams*, though חלומות *somnia*, would have suited the verse (if the book be in metre) altogether as well as חזיונות *visiones*.—It could not surely be a *wind*, as some translate the word דרר. Because the circumstance *standing still* is not so compatible with the nature of a wind; and a wind would have passed *above* him, all around him, as well as *before* him. Not to add, how low a remark it is, and how unworthy of a place in so august a description, that he *could not discern the form* of a wind.—It seems, therefore, to have been a real spirit: either *angelical*, as were those which presented themselves to *Abraham* resting at the door of his tent, and to *Lot* sitting in the gate of *Sodom*; or else the spirit of some *departed saint*, as in the case of *Samuel's* apparition, or the famous appearance of *Moses* and *Elijah* on the Mount of transfiguration.—A spirit, assuming some *vehicle*, in order to become visible to the human eye: which, accordingly, *Eliphaz* saw, exhibiting itself as an object of sight; but saw so obscurely and indistinctly, that he was not able either to describe its *aspect*, or to discern *whom* it resembled.

'Twas in the *dead of night*. All nature lay shrouded in darkness. Every creature was buried in sleep. The most profound silence reigned through the universe. In these solemn moments, *Eliphaz* alone, all wakeful and solitary, was musing upon sublime and heavenly subjects.—When, lo! an awful being, from the invisible realms, burst into his apartment *. *A spirit passed before his face*. Astonishment seized the beholder. His bones shivered within him; his flesh trembled all over him; and the hair of his head stood erect with horror.—Sudden and unexpected was the appearance of the phantom; not such its departure. *It stood still* to present itself more fully to his view. It made a solemn pause, to prepare his mind for some momentous message.—After which a voice was heard: a voice, for the importance of its meaning, worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance; for the solemnity of its delivery, enough to alarm a heart of stone. It spoke; and this was the purport of its words:—“*Shall man,*

* I have given this solemn picture a *modern* dress, rather for the sake of variety and illustration, than from any apprehension of improving the admirable original. Such an attempt, I am sensible, would be more absurdly vain, than to lacquer gold, or paint the diamond. The description, in *Eliphaz's* own language, is awful and affecting to the last degree; a *night-piece*, dressed in all the circumstances of the deepest horror. I question whether *Shak speare* himself, though so peculiarly happy for his great command of terrifying images, has any thing superior or comparable to this. The judges of fine composition *see* the masterly strokes; and, I believe, the most ordinary reader *feels* them, chilling his blood; and awakening emotions of dread in his mind.

64 CONTEMPLATIONS

“ *frail man, be just before the mighty GOD?*
 “ *Shall even the most accomplished of mortals be*
 “ *pure in the sight of his Maker * ! Behold, and*
 “ *consider it attentively. He put no such trust*
 “ *in his most exalted servants, as should be.*
 “ *speak them incapable of defect. And his very*
 “ *angels he chargeth with folly ; as sinking, even*
 “ *in the highest perfection of their holiness,*
 “ *infinitely beneath his transcendent glories ;*
 “ *as falling, even in all the fidelity of their*
 “ *obedience, inexpressibly short of the homage*
 “ *due to his adorable Majesty. If angelic na-*
 “ *tures must not presume to justify either them-*
 “ *selves or their services, before uncreated pu-*
 “ *rity ; how much more absurd is such a notion,*
 “ *how much more impious such an attempt, in*
 “ *them that dwell in houses of clay ; whose ori-*
 “ *ginal is from the dust, and whose state is all*
 “ *imperfection !”*

I would observe from hence, the very singular necessity of that *poverty of spirit*, which entirely *renounces* its own attainments ; and most thankfully *submits* to the righteousness of the

* There seems to be a significant and beautiful *gradation* in the Hebrew words אָנֹכִי and נֹכַח, which I have endeavoured to preserve, by a sort of *paraphrastic version*.—The reader will observe a *new turn* given to the sentiment ; preferable, I think, to that which our *English* translation exhibits. Not, *Shall man be more just than GOD ?* but, *Shall man be just before, or in the sight of, GOD ?* The passage, thus rendered, speaks a truth incomparably more weighty, and needful to be inculcated : a truth exactly parallel to that humbling confession of the Prophet, *We are all as an unclean thing* ; and to that solemn declaration of the Psalmist, *In thy sight shall no living man be justified*.

incarnate GOD.—To inculcate this lesson, the Son of the Blessed came down from heaven; and pressed no other principle, with so repeated an importunity, on his hearers*. To instil the same doctrine, the HOLY GHOST touched the lips of the apostles with sacred eloquence; and made it an eminent part of their commission, “to demolish every high imagination.” That no expedient might be wanting, to give it a deep and lasting efficacy on the human mind; a phantom arises from the valley of the shadow of death, or a teacher descends from the habitation of spirits.—Whatever then we neglect, let us not neglect to cultivate *this grace*, which has been so variously taught, so powerfully enforced.

HARK! a *doleful voice*.—With sudden starts, and hideous screams, it disturbs the silence of the peaceful night. ’Tis the *screech-owl*, sometimes in frantic, sometimes in disconsolate accents, uttering her woes†. She flies the vocal grove, and shuns the society of all the feathered

* It is well worthy of our observation, says an excellent commentator, “That no one sentence uttered by our LORD is so frequently repeated as this; *Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted* :” which often occurs in the evangelists; but is never duly accomplished in us, till we disclaim all pretension to merit and righteousness of our own, and seek them only in the atonement and obedience of JESUS CHRIST.

† “Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo

“Sæpe queri, longasque in fletum ducere voces.” VIRG.

Thus sung that charming genius, that prince of the ancient poets, that most consummate master of elegance and accuracy; all whose *sentiments* are nature, whose every *description* is a picture, whose whole *language* is music.

choir. The blooming gardens, and flowery meads, have no charms for her. Obscene shades, ragged ruins, and walls overgrown with ivy, are her favourite haunts. Above, the mouldering precipice nods, and threatens a fall; below, the toad crawls, or the poisonous adder hisses. The sprightly morning, which awakens other animals into joy, administers no pleasure to this gloomy recluse. Even the smiling face of day is her aversion; and all its lovely scenes create nothing but uneasiness.

So, just so, would it fare with the *ungodly*, were it possible to suppose their admission into the chaste and bright abodes of endless felicity. they would find nothing but disappointment and shame, even at the fountain head of happiness and honour.—For how could the tongue, habituated to *profaneness*, taste any delight in the harmonious adorations of heaven? How could the lips, cankered with *slander*, relish the raptures of everlasting praise? Where would be the satisfaction of the *vain* beauty, or the *supercilious* grandee? Since, in the temple of the skies, no incense of flattery would be addressed to the former; nor any obsequious homage paid to the latter.—The spotless and inconceivable purity of the blessed God would *flash* confusion on the lascivious eye. The envious mind must be on a *rack* of self-tormenting *passions* to observe millions of happy beings, shining in all the perfections of glory, and solacing themselves in the fulness of joy.—In short, the unsanctified soul, amidst holy and triumphant spirits;

even in the refined regions of bliss and immortality ; would be like this melancholy-bird, *dislodged* from her darksome retirement, and *imprisoned* under the beams of day *.

The voice of this creature screaming at our windows, or of the raven croaking over our houses, is, they say, a *token* of approaching death. There are persons who would regard such an incident with no small degree of solicitude. Trivial as it is, it would damp their spirits, perhaps break their rest.—One cannot but wonder, that people should suffer themselves to be affrighted at such *fantastical*, and yet be quite unaffected with *real*, presages of their dissolution. Real presages of this awful event address us from every quarter. What are these *incumbent glooms*, which overwhelm the world, but a kind of *pall* provided for Nature ; and an image of that long night, which will quickly cover the

* I would beg of the reader to observe, with what *emphasis* and *propriety* our LORD touches this important point, in his memorable reply to Nicodemus. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he CANNOT enter into the kingdom of heaven ;* q. d. “ I waive the authority of the Supreme Judge, and speak with the *condescension* of a teacher in Israel. Though I might, without being liable to the least control, pass it into a sovereign decree, that unregenerated mortals, who are slaves to corrupt appetite, *SHALL NOT enter the habitations of the just ;* I rather chuse to represent it as a case *utterly impossible ;* and charge the calamity, not upon Divine severity, but upon human folly. Such persons, from the very nature of things, preclude themselves ; they incapacitate their own minds ; and contrarieties must be reconciled, before *they*, in their unregenerate condition, *can be partakers of those spiritual and sublime delights.*” *John* iii. 3.

inhabitants of the whole earth? What an affinity has the sleep*, which will very soon weigh down my drowsy eyelids, with that state of entire cessation, in which all my senses must be laid aside! The silent chamber, and the bed of slumber, are a very significant representation of the land, where all things are hushed, all things are forgotten.—What meant that deep *death-bell note*, which, the other evening, saddened the air? Laden with heaviest accents, it struck our ears, and seemed to knock at the door of our hearts. Surely, it brought a message to surviving mortals, and thus the tidings ran: “Mortals, the destroyer of your race “ is on his way. The last enemy has begun “ the pursuit; and is gaining ground upon “ you every moment. His paths are strewn “ ed with heaps of slain. Even now his javelin has laid one of your neighbours in the “ dust; and will soon, very soon, aim the inevitable blow at each of your lives.”

We need not go down to the charnel-house, nor carry our search into the repositories of the dead, in order to find memorials of our impending doom. A multitude of these remembrancers are planted in all our paths, and point the heedless passengers to their long home. I can hardly enter a considerable town, but I meet the funeral procession, or the mourners going about the streets. The *hatchment* suspended on the wall, or the *crape* streaming in the air, are silent intimations, that both *rich* and *poor*

* “ Et confanguineus lethi sopor.”

VIRG.

have been emptying their houses, and replenishing their sepulchres. I can scarce join in any conversation, but mention is made of some that are given over by the physician, and hovering on the confines of eternity; of others, that have just dropt their clay amidstweeping friends, and are gone to appear before the Judge of all the earth! There's not a *newspaper* comes to my hand, but, amidst all its entertaining narrations, reads several serious *lectures* of *mortality*. What else are the repeated accounts—of age worn out by slow-consuming sicknesses—of youth dashed to pieces by some sudden stroke of casualty—of patriots exchanging their seats in the senate for a lodging in the tomb—of misers resigning their breath, and (O relentless destiny!) leaving their very riches for others? Even the vehicles of our amusement are registers of the deceased; and the voice of *Fame* seldom sounds, but in concert with a *knell*.

These monitors crowd every place; not so much as the scenes of our diversion excepted. What are the decorations of our public buildings, and the most elegant furniture of our parlours, but the imagery of death, and the trophies of the tomb? That marble bust, and those gilded pictures, how solemnly they *recognize* the fate of others, and speakingly *remind* us of our own!—I see, I hear, and, O! I feel this great truth. It is interwoven with my constitution. The frequent decays of the structure foretel its final ruin. What are all the pains, that have been darted through my limbs; what every

disease, that has assaulted my health ; but the *advanced guards* of the foe ? What are the languors and weariness that attend the labours of each revolving day, but the more *secret practices* of the adversary, slowly undermining the earthly tabernacle ?

Amidst so many notices, shall we go on thoughtless and unconcerned ? Can none of these prognostics, which are sure as oracles, awaken our attention, and engage our circumspection ? *Noah*, 'tis written *being warned of GOD, prepared an ark*. Imitate, my soul, imitate this excellent example. Admonished by such a cloud of witnesses, be continually putting thyself in a readiness for the last change. Let not that day, of which thou hast so many infallible signs, come upon thee unawares. — Get the *ivy untwined*, and thy affections disentangled from this inchanting world, that thou mayst be able to quit it without reluctance. Get the dreadful *hand-writing cancelled*, and all thy sins blotted out, that thou mayst depart in peace, and have nothing to fear at the decisive tribunal. Get, O ! get thyself interested in the Redeemer's *merits*, and transformed into his sacred *image* ; then shalt thou be meet for the inheritance of saints in light, and mayst even desire to be dissolved, and to be with CHRIST.

SOMETIMES in my evening-walk I have heard

————— The wakeful bird
Sing darkling ; and, in shadiest covert hid,
Tune her nocturnal note *.

* MILT. *Par. Lost*. B. III. line 38.

How different the *airs* of this charming songster, from those harsh and boding *outcries*! The little creature ran through all the variations of music; and shewed herself mistress of every grace, which constitutes or embellishes harmony.—Sometimes she swells a manly throat, and her song kindles into ardour. The tone is so *bold*, and strikes with such energy, you would imagine the sprightly serenader in the very next thicket. Anon the strain *languishes*, and the mournful warbler melts into tenderness. The melancholy notes just steal upon the shades, and faintly touch your ear; or, in soft and sadly-pleasing accents, they seem to die along the distant vale. Silence is pleased, and Night listens to the trilling tale.

What an invitation is this, to slip away from the thronged city! This coy and modest minstrel entertains only the *lovers of retirement*. Those who are carousing over their bowls, or ranting at the riotous club, lose this feast of harmony.—In like manner, the pleasures of religion, and the joy of reconciliation with God; the satisfactions arising from an established interest in CHRIST, and from the prospect of a blissful immortality; these are all lost to the mind that is ever *in the crowd*; and dares not, or delights not, to retire into itself.—Are we charmed with the nightingale's song? Do we wish to have it nearer, and hear it oftener? Let us seek a renewed heart, and a resigned will; a conscience that whispers peace, and passions that are tuned by grace. Then shall we never want a melody

in our own breasts, far more *musically pleasing* than sweet *Philomela's* sweetest strains.

As different as the voices of these birds are the *circumstances* of those few persons who continue awake.—Some are squandering, pearls shall I say, or kingdoms? No; but what is unspeakably more precious, Time; squandering this inestimable talent, with the most senseless and wanton prodigality. Not content with allowing a few *spare minutes* for the purpose of necessary recreation, they lavish many hours, devote *whole nights*, to that idle diversion of shuffling, ranging, and detaching, a set of painted pasteboards.—Others, instead of this busy trifling, act the part of their own tormentors. They even piquet themselves *, and call it amusement; they are torn by wild horses, yet term it a sport. What else is the *gamster's* practice! His mind is stretched on the tenter-hooks of anxious suspense, and agitated by the fiercest extremes of hope and fear. While the dice are rattling, his heart is throbbing; his fortune is tottering; and, possibly, at the very next throw, the one sinks in the gulf of ruin, the other is hurried into the rage of distraction.

Some, snatched from the bloom of Health, and the lap of Plenty, are confined to the *chamber of sickness*: where they are constrained, either to plunge into the everlasting world, in an unprepared condition; or else (sad alternative!) to think over all the follies of a heedless

* Alluding to a very painful punishment inflicted on delinquents among the soldiery.

life, and all the bitterness of approaching death. The disease rages ; it baffles the force of medicine ; and urges the reluctant wretch to the brink of the precipice ; while furies rouse the conscience, and point at the bottomless pit below. —Perhaps, his *drooping mother*, deprived long ago of the husband of her bosom, and bereft of all her other offspring, is, even now, receiving the blow which consummates her calamities*. In vain she tries to assuage the sorrows of a beloved son ; in vain she attempts, with her tender offices, to prolong a life dearer than her own. He faints in her arms ; he bows his head ; he sinks in death. Fatal, doubly fatal, that last expiring pang ! While it dislodges the unwilling soul, it rends an *only child* from the yearning em-

* This brings to my mind one of the deepest mourning-pieces extant in the productions of the pen. The sacred historian paints it in all the simplicity of style, yet with all the strength of colouring.—*When JESUS came nigh to the gate of the city, behold ! there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.*—What a gradation is here ! How pathetically beautiful ! Every fresh circumstance widens the wound ; aggravates the calamity ; till the description is worked up into the most finished picture of exquisite and inconsolable distress.—He was a young man ; cut off in the flower of life, amidst a thousand gay expectations, and smiling hopes. A son ; an *only son* ; the afflicted mother's all : so that none remained to preserve the name, or perpetuate the family. What rendered the case still more deplorable, *she was a widow* : left entirely desolate ; abandoned to her woes ; without any to share her sorrows, or to comfort her under the irreparable loss.—Is not this a fine sketch of the *impassioned and picturesque* ? Who can consider the narrative with any attention, and not feel his heart penetrated with a tender commiseration ?

Luke vii. 12.

braces of a parent, and tears away the support of her age from a disconsolate widow.

While *those* long for a reprieve, *others* invite the stroke. Quite weary of the world, with a restless impatience, they sigh for dissolution: some pining away under the tedious decays of an incurable *consumption*; or gasping for breath, and almost suffocated by an inundation of *drop-sical* waters. On some a relentless *cancer* has fastened its envenomed teeth; and is gnawing them, though in the midst of bodily vigour, in the midst of pitying friends, gradually to death. Others are on a rack of agonies, by convulsive fits of the stone. O! how the pain writhes their limbs; how the sweat bedews their flesh; and their eye-balls wildly roll! Methinks the Night condoles with these her distressed children; and sheds dewy tears over their sorrowful abodes.— But of all mortals, *they* are the most exquisitely miserable, who groan beneath the pressure of a *melancholy* mind, or smart under the lashes of a *resentful* conscience. Though robed in ermine, or covered with jewels, the state of a slave chained to the galleys, or of an exile condemned to the mines, is a perfect paradise compared with theirs.

O! that the *votaries* of mirth, whose life is a continued round of merriment and whim, would bestow one serious reflection on this *variety* of human *woes*! It might teach them to be less enamoured with the few languid sweets, that are thinly scattered through this vale of tears, and environed with such a multitude of

ragged thorns. It might teach them no longer to dance away their years, with a giddy *rambling impulse*; but to aspire, with a determined aim, after those happy regions, where delights, abundant and unembittered, flow.

Can there be circumstances, which a man of wisdom would more earnestly deprecate, than these several instances of grievous tribulation? There are; and, what is very astonishing, they are frequently the desire and the choice of those who fancy themselves the sole heirs of happiness: those I mean, who are launching out into the depths of *extravagance*, and running excessive lengths of *riot*: who are prostituting their reputation, and sacrificing their peace, to the gratification of their lusts; sap-
ping the foundation of their health in debaucheries; or shipwrecking the interests of their families in their bowels; and, what is worse, are forfeiting the joys of an eternal heaven for the *sordid* satisfactions of the beast; for the *transitory* sensations of an hour.—Ye slaves of appetite, how far am I from envying your gross sensualities, and voluptuous revels! Little, ah! little are you sensible, that, while Indulgence showers her roses, and Luxury diffuses her odours, they scatter *poisons* also, and shed unheeded *bane**: evils incomparably more malignant than the wormwood and gall of the sharpest affliction.—Since death is in the drunk-

* “Yes; in the flow’rs that wreathe the sparkling bowl,
“Fell adders hiss, and pois’nous serpents roll.”

PRIOR’S *Sol.*

ard's cup, and worse than poniards in the harlot's embrace, may it ever be the privilege of the man whom I love, to go without his share of these *pestilent sweets* *!

ABUNDANCE of living sparks glitter in the lanes, and twinkle under the hedges. I suppose they are the *glow-worms*: which have lighted their little lamps, and obtained leave, through the absence of the sun, to play a feeble beam. A faint glimmer just serves to render them perceivable, without tending at all to dissipate the shades, or making any amends for the departed day.—Should some weather-beaten traveller, dropping with wet, and shivering with cold, hover round this *mimicry of fire*, in order to dry his garments, and warm his benumbed limbs; should some bewildered traveller, groping for his way, in a starless night and trackless desert, take one of these *languid tapers*, as a light to his feet, and a lantern to his path: how certainly would both the one and the other be frustrated of their expectation!—And are *they* more likely to succeed, who, neglecting that sovereign balm, which distilled from the cross, apply any *carnal* diversion to heal the anxiety of the mind? who, deaf to the infallible decisions of revelation, resign themselves over to the erroneous *conjectures of reason*, in order

* *Quam suave est suavitatibus istis carere!* was St. Augustine's pious exclamation. The substance of which Mr. Pope has expressed, with more simplicity, and with no less dignity.

“Count all th' advantage prosp'rous Vice attains;
’Tis but what Virtue flies from, and disdains.”

to find the way that leadeth unto life ? or, lastly, who have recourse to the *froth* of this vain world, for a satisfactory portion, and a substantial happiness ? Their conduct is in no degree wiser ; their disappointment equally sure ; and their miscarriage infinitely more disastrous. To speak in the delicate language of a sacred writer, “ They sow the wind, and will reap the “ whirlwind *.”

To speak more plainly ; the pleasures of the world, which we are *all* so prone to dote upon ; and the powers of fallen reason, which *some* are so apt to idolize † ; are not only vain, but

* *Hof.* viii. 7.

† I hope it will be observed, that I am far from decrying that noble faculty of Reason, when exerted in her proper sphere ; when acting in a *deferential subordination* to the revealed will of Heaven. While she exercises her powers within these appointed limits, she is unspeakably serviceable, and cannot be too industriously cultivated.—But, when she sets up herself in *proud contradistinction* to the sacred oracles ; when, all arrogant and self-sufficient, she says to the word of Scripture, *I have no need of thee*, she is then, I must be bold to maintain, not only a glow-worm, but an *ignis fatuus* ; not only a bubble, but a snare.

May not this remark, with the strictest propriety, and without the least limitation, be applied to the *generality* of our modern romances, novels, and theatrical entertainments ? These are commonly calculated to inflame a wanton fancy ; or, if conducted with so much modesty as not to debase the affections, they pervert the judgment, and bewilder the taste. By their incredible adventures ; their extravagant parade of gallantry ; and their characters, widely different from truth and nature ; they inspire foolish conceits ; beget idle expectations ; introduce a disgust of genuine history ; and indispose their admirers to acquiesce in the *decent* civilities, or to relish the *sober* satisfactions, of common life.

treacherous: not only a *painted flame*, like these sparkling animals; but much like those untu-
 tuous exhalations, which arise from the marshy
 ground, and often dance before the eyes of the
 benighted wayfaring man. Kindled into a sort
 of fire, they personate a guide, and seem to offer
 their service; but, blazing with *delusive light*, mis-
 lead their follower into hidden pits, headlong
 precipices, and unfathomable gulfs; where, far
 from his beloved friends, far from all hopes
 of succour, the unhappy wanderer is swallowed
 up and lost.

NOT long ago, we observed a very surprising
 appearance in the western sky. A *prodigious*
star took its flaming route through those coasts;
 and trailed, as it passed, a tremendous length
 of fire, almost over half the heavens. Some,
 I imagine, viewed the portentous stranger, with
 much the same anxious amazement as *Belshaz-
 zar* beheld the hand-writing upon the wall.
 Some looked upon it as a *bloody flag**, hung
 out by divine resentment, over a guilty world.
 Some read, in its glaring visage, the fate of na-
 tions, and the fall of kingdoms †. To others,
 it shook, or seemed to shake, *pestilence* and war
 from its horrid hair.—For my part, I am not
 so superstitious as to regard what every astro-
 loger has to prognosticate, upon the accession
 of a *comet*, or the projection of its huge va-

* —“ *Liquida si quando nocte cometæ*

“ *Sanguinei lugubre rubent.*”——

VIRG.

† —“ *Crinemque timendi*

“ *Sideris, et terris mutantem regna cometem.*” LUCAN.

poury train. Nothing can be more precarious and unjustifiable than to draw such conclusions from such events: since they neither are preternatural effects, nor do they throw the frame of things into any disorder. I would rather adore that Omnipotent Being, who rolled those stupendous orbs from his creating hand; and leads them, by his providential eye, through unmeasurable tracts of æther: who bids them now approach the sun, and glow with unsufferable ardours*; now retreat to the utmost bounds of our planetary system, and make their entry among other worlds.

They are harmless visitants. I acquit them from the charge of causing, or being accessory to, desolating plagues. Would to God, there were no other more formidable indications of *approaching judgments, or impending ruin!* But, alas! when vice becomes predominant, and is religion almost epidemical: when the sabbaths of a jealous God are notoriously profaned; and that "name, which is great, wonderful, "and holy," is prostituted to the meanest, or abused to the most execrable purposes: when the worship of our great Creator and Preserver is banished from many of the most *conspicuous families*; and it is deemed a piece of rude im-

* "The comet in the year 1680, according to Sir Isaac Newton's computation, was, in its nearest approach, above 166 times nearer the sun than the earth is. Consequently, its heat was then 28,000 times greater than that of summer. So that a ball of iron as big as the earth, heated by it, would hardly become cool in 50,000 years." DER H. *Astro-Invol.*

80 CONTEMPLATIONS

pertinence so much as to mention the gracious Redeemer, in our *genteel interviews*; when it passes for an elegant freedom of behaviour to ridicule the mysteries of Christianity; and a species of refined conversation, to taint the air with lascivious hints, when those who sit in the *scorner's chair* sin with a high hand: and many of those who wear the *professor's garb* are destitute of the power, and content themselves with the mere form, of godliness: when such is the state of a community, there is reason, too apparent reason, to be horribly afraid. Such *phenomena*, abounding in the moral world, are not fanciful, but real omens. Will not an injured God "be avenged on such a nation as this!" Will he not be provoked to "sweep it with the besom of destruction *?"

O! that the inhabitants of *Great Britain* would lay these alarming considerations to heart! The LORD of hosts has commanded the sword of *civil discord* to return into its sheath. But have we returned every one from his *evil ways*? Are we become a renewed people; devoted to a dying Saviour; and zealous of good works?—What mean those peals of sobs, which burst from the *expiring cattle*? What mean

* *Isa. xiv. 23.* The eternal Sovereign, speaking of *Babylon*, denounces this threatening, *I will sweep it with the besom of destruction.*—What a noble, but dreadful, image is here! How strongly and awfully portrayed! How pregnant also in its signification? intimating the *vile nature*, and expressing the *total extirpation*, of this wicked people; at the same time, suggesting the *perfect ease* with which the righteous God would execute his intended vengeance.

those melancholy moans, where the lustly droves were wont to low *? What mean those arrows of untimely death, discharged on our innocent and useful animals?

No wantonness or sloth has vitiated the blood of these laborious, temperate creatures. They have contracted no disease from unseasonable indulgencies, and inordinate revelling. The pure stream is their drink; the simple herb their repast. Neither care disturbs their sleep, nor passion inflames their breast. Whence then are they visited with such terrible disorders, as no prudence can prevent, nor any medicines heal?—Surely, these calamities are the weapons of Divine displeasure, and manifest chastisements of an evil generation †. Surely God, the “God to whom vengeance belongeth,” has still a controversy with our sinful land. And who can tell where the visitation will end? what a storm may follow these prelusive drops?—O! that we may “hear the rod, and who hath appointed it!” Taught by these *penal effects* of our disobedience, may we remove the *accursed thing* from our tents ‡; our practices; our hearts! May we turn from all ungodliness, be-

* If these papers should be so happy as to outlive their author, perhaps, it may be needful to inform posterity, that the above-mentioned hints allude to a most terrible, contagious, and mortal *dysenteria*, raging among the *horned cattle*, in various parts of the kingdom.

† “*Hinc latis vituli vulgo moriuntur in herbis,*

“*Et dulces animas plena ad præsepia reddunt.*

“*Balatu hinc pecorum, et crebris mugitibus amnes,*

“*Arentesque sonant ripæ, collesque supini.*” VIRG.

‡ *Josh. vi. 18.*

fore wrath come upon us to the uttermost; before iniquity prove our ruin ?

SOMETIMES, at this hour, another most remarkable sight amuses the curious, and alarms the vulgar. A blaze of lambent meteors is kindled, or some very extraordinary *lights* are refracted, *in the quarters of the north*.—The streams of radiance, like legions rushing to the engagement, meet and mingle, insomuch that the air seems to be all conflicting fire. Within a while they start from one another; and, like legions in precipitate flight, sweep, each a separate way, through the firmament. Now they are quiescent; anon they are thrown into a quivering motion; presently the whole horizon is illuminated with the glancing flames. Sometimes, with an aspect *awfully ludicrous*, they represent extravagant and antic vagaries: at other times, you would suspect that some invisible hand was playing off the dumb *artillery* of the *skies*: and, by a strange expedient, giving us the flash without the roar.

The villagers gaze at the spectacle, first with wonder, then with horror. A general *panic* seizes the country. Every heart throbs, and every face is pale. The crowds that flock together, instead of diminishing, increase the dread. They catch contagion from each other's looks and words; while fear is in every eye, and every tongue speaks the language of terror. Some see *hideous shapes*, armies mixing in fierce encounter, or fields swimming with blood. Some foresee *direful events*, states overthrown, or

mighty monarchs tottering on their thrones. Others, scared with still more frightful apprehensions, think of nothing but the *day of doom*.

"Sure," says one, "the unalterable hour is struck, and the end of all things come."—

"See," replies another, "how the blasted stars look wan! Are not these the signs of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven?"—"JESUS prepare us" (cries a third, and lifts his eyes in devotion) "for the Archangel's trump, and the great tribunal!"

If this *waving brightness*, which plays innocently over our heads, be so amazing to multitudes; what inexpressible consternation must overwhelm unthinking mortals, when the *general conflagration* commences! The day, the dreadful day, is approaching, "*in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise* *,"

* 2 Pet. iii. 10. I have often thought this verse an eminent instance of that kind of beautiful writing, in which the very *sound* bears a sort of *significancy*; at least, carries an exact correspondence with the sense. The original expression —*παρρησιον*—is one of the hoarsest and deepest words in language. Nothing could be more exquisitely adapted to affect the ear, as well as impress the *imagination*, with the wreck of nature, and the crash of a falling world.—I scarce ever read this clause, but it brings to my mind that admired description in MILTON:

—"On a sudden open fly,

"With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,

"Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate

"Harsh thunder.——"

Book II. line 879.

It is a pleasing employ, and a very laudable office of true criticism, to point out these inferior recommendations of the *sacred classics*. Though, I believe, the inspired writers themselves, amidst all the elevation and magnificence of their divine ideas, disdained a scrupulous attention to such *little niceties* of style.

“ *and the elements shall melt with fervent heat;*
 “ *the earth also, and all the works that are therein,*
 “ *shall be burnt up.*” That mighty hand, which
 once opened the windows from on high, and
 broke up the fountains of the great deep, will
 then unlock all the *magazines of fire*, and pour
 a *second deluge* upon the earth. The vengeful
 flames, kindled by the breath of the Almighty,
 spread themselves from the centre to the circum-
 ference. Nothing can withstand their impetu-
 osity; nothing can escape their rage. Universal
 desolation attends their progress. Magnificent
 palaces, and solemn temples, are laid in ashes.
 Spacious cities and impregnable towers, are
 mingled in one smoking mass. Not only the pro-
 ductions of *human art*, but the works of *almigh-
 ty power*, are fuel for the devouring element.
 The everlasting mountains melt, like the snows
 which cover their summit. Even vast oceans
 serve only to augment the inconceivable rapi-
 dity and fury of the blaze.—O! how shall I,
 or others, stand undismayed amidst the glare of
 a *burning world*, unless the LORD JEHOVAH be
 our defence? How shall we be upheld in secu-
 rity, when the globe itself is sinking in a *fiery
 ruin*, unless the Rock of Ages be our support?

BEHOLD! a new spectacle of wonder! The
moon is making her entry on the eastern sky.
 See her rising in clouded majesty! opening, as
 it were, and asserting her original commission
 to *rule over the night*. All grand and stately,
 but somewhat sullied, is her aspect. However,
 she *brightens as she advances*; and grows clearer

as she climbs higher : till, at length, her silver
 loses all its dross ; she unveils her peerless light ;
 and becomes " the beauty of heaven, the glory
 " of the stars * ;" delighting every eye, and
 cheering the whole world, with the brightness
 of her appearance, and the softness of her splen-
 dours.—O ! thou Queen of the shades ! may it
 be my ambition to follow this thy instructive
 example ! While others are fond to transcribe
 the fashions of little courts, and to mimic per-
 sonages of inferior state ; be it mine to imitate
 thy *improving purity* ! May my conduct become
 more unblemished, and my temper more refi-
 ned, as I proceed farther and farther in my pro-
 bationary course ! May every sordid desire wear
 away, and every irregular appetite be gradu-
 ally lost, as I make nearer approaches to the
 celestial mansions !—Will not this be a comfort-
 able evidence, that I too shall shine in my ad-
 ored Redeemer's kingdom ? shine with a *richer*
 lustre, than that which radiates from thy resplen-
 dent orb ; shine with an *unfading* lustre, when
 every ray that beams from thy beauteous sphere
 is totally extinguished ?

THE day afforded us a variety of entertain-
 ing sights. These were all withdrawn, at the
 accession of darkness. The stars, kindly offic-
 ious, immediately lent us their aid. This served
 to *alleviate* the frown of night, rather than to
recover the objects from their obscurity. A faint
 ray, scarcely reflected, and not from the entire

* *Ecclesi. xliii. 9.*

— " *Lucidum cœli decus.*"

HOR.

surface of things, gave the straining eye a very imperfect glimpse; such as rather mocked, than satisfied, vision.—Now the moon is risen, and has collected all her beams, the veil is taken off from the countenance of Nature. I see the recumbant flocks; I see the green hedge-rows, though without the feathered choristers hopping from spray to spray. In short, I see once again the world's great picture; not indeed in its late lively colours, but more *delicately shaded*, and arrayed in *softer charms* *.

What a *majestic scene* is here? incomparably grand, and exquisitely fine!—The moon, like an immense crystal lamp, pendent in the magnificent ceiling of the heavens. The stars, like so many thousands of golden tapers, fixed in their azure sockets. All pouring their lustre on spacious cities, and lofty mountains; glittering on the ocean; gleaming on the forest; and opening a prospect, wide as the eye can glance, more various than fancy can paint †.—We are

* ——— Now reigns

Full orb'd the moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things. ——— MILT.

† “ As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
“ O'er heav'n's clear azure spreads her sacred light;
“ When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
“ And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene:
“ Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
“ And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole;
“ O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
“ And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head:
“ Then shine the vales; the rocks in prospect rise;
“ A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
“ The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
“ Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.”

Iliad. VIII.

forward to admire the performances of human art. A landscape, elegantly designed, and executed with a masterly hand; a piece of statuary, which seems, amidst all the recommendations of exact proportion, and graceful attitude, to soften into flesh, and almost breathe with life; these little *imitations* of Nature we behold with a pleasing surprise. And shall we be less affected, less delighted, with the inexpressibly-noble and completely-finished *original*!—The ample dimensions of *Ranelagh's* dome; the gay illuminations of *Vaux-hall* grove; I should scorn to mention on such an occasion, were they not the objects of general admiration. Shall we be charmed with those puny essays of finite ingenuity; and touched with no transport at this stupendous display of omnipotent skill? at the august grandeur, and shining stateliness, of the firmament? which forms an alcove for ten thousand worlds, and is ornamented with myriads of everlasting luminaries.—Surely, this must betray, not only a total *want* of *religion*, but the most abject littleness of mind, and the utmost *poverty* of *genius*.

The moon is not barely “an ornament in the high places of the LORD*,” but of signal service to the inhabitants of the earth.—How uncomfortable is deep, pitchy, total darkness!

I transcribe these lines, because Mr. *Pope* says, they exhibit, in the original, the finest *night-piece* in poetry. And, if they are so beautiful in *Homer's* language, who can suspect their suffering any disadvantage from the pen of this admirable translator?

* *Ecclesi* xliiii. 9.

especially, in the long absence of the winter's sun. Welcome, therefore, thrice welcome, this auspicious gift of Providence, to enliven the nocturnal gloom, and line with silver the raven-coloured mantle of Night.—How desirable to have our summer-evenings illuminated! that we may be able to tread the dewy meads, and breathe the delicious fragrance of our gardens; especially, when the sultry heats render it irksome and fatiguing to walk abroad by day.—How cheering to the *shepherd*, the use of this universal lantern; as he tends his fleecy charge, or late consigns them to their hurdled cots! How comfortable and how advantageous to the *mariner*, as he ploughs the midnight-main, to adjust the tackling, to explore his way, and, under the influence of this beaming scone, to avoid the fatal rock!—For these, and other beneficial purposes, the hand of the ALMIGHTY has hung the *stately branch* on high; and filled it with a splendour, not confined to a single edifice, or commensurate to a particular square, but diffusive as the whole extent of the hemisphere.

The most faithful of our inferior servants are sometimes tardy in their office, sometimes negligent of their duty. But this celestial attendant is most *exactly punctual*, at all the stated periods of her ministration. If we chuse to prolong our journey after the sun is gone down; the moon, during her whole *increase*, is always ready to act in the capacity of a guide. If we are inclined to set out very early in the morn-

ing; the moon, in her *decrease*, prevents the dawn, on purpose to offer her assistance. And, because it is so pleasant a thing for the eyes to behold the light, the moon, at her *full*, by a course of unintermitted waiting, gives us, as it were, a double day.—How apparently has the divine Wisdom interested itself, in providing even for the *pleasureable accommodation* of man! How desirous that he should want no piece of commodious furniture, no kind of delightful convenience! and, in prosecution of these benevolent intentions, has annexed so valuable an appendage to the terrestrial globe.—Justly, therefore, does the Psalmist celebrate that admirable constitution, which ordained *the moon and the stars to govern the night*, as an instance of rich goodness, and of mercy which endureth for ever *

THE moon, it is confessed, is *no luminous body*. All the brightness which beautifies her countenance is originally in the sun, and no more than transmissively in her. That glorious orb is the parent of day, and the palace of light. From thence the morning-star gilds her horn †; from thence the planetary circles are crowned

* *Psal. cxxxvi. 9.*

† I might, to justify this expression, observe, that the planet *Venus*, commonly called *the morning-star*, is found, by our telescopes, frequently to appear *horned*; or to have a *crecent* of light, somewhat like the moon, a little before or after her conjunction. But this would be a remark too deep and refined for my scheme; which proceeds only upon a *superficial* knowledge, and the most *obvious* appearances, of Nature.

with lustre; and from thence the moon derives all her silver radiance.—It is pleasing to reflect, that such is the case with the *all-sufficient Redeemer*, and his *dependent people*. We are replenished from his fulness. What do we possess, which we have not received; and what can we desire, which we may not expect; from that never-failing Source of all good? He is the author of our faith, and the former of our graces. In his unspotted life, we see the path; in his meritorious death, the price; and in his triumphant resurrection, the proof, of bliss and immortality. If we offend, and fall seven times a-day; he is the LORD our *peace* *. If we are depraved, and our best deeds very unworthy; he is the LORD our *righteousness* †. If we are blind, and even brutish, in heavenly knowledge; he is the LORD our *wisdom* ‡: his Word dispels the shades; his Spirit scatters the intellectual gloom; his eye looks our darkness into day. In short, we are nothing, and “CHRIST is all.” Worse than defective in ourselves, “we are *complete* in him.” So that if we shine, it is with delegated rays, and with borrowed light. We act by a strength, and glory in merits, not our own!—O! may we be thoroughly sensible of our dependence on the Saviour! May we constantly imbibe his propitious beams; and never, by indulging *unbelief*, or backsliding into *folly*, withdraw our souls from his benign influences! lest we lose our comfort, and our holiness; as the fair ruler of the night loses her

* *Jas.* vi. 23.† *Jer.* xxii. 6.‡ *1 Cor.* i. 30.

splendour, when her urn is turned from its fountain *, and receives no more communications of solar effulgence.

THE moon is incessantly *varying*, either in her aspect or her stages.—Sometimes she looks full upon us, and her visage is all lustre. Sometimes she appears in profile, and shews us only half her enlightened face. Anon a radiant crescent but just adorns her brow. Soon it dwindles into a slender streak; till, at length, all her beauty vanishes, and she becomes a beamless orb.—Sometimes she rises with the *descending day*, and begins her procession amidst admiring multitudes. Ere long she defers her progress till the *midnight-watches*, and steals unobserved upon the sleeping world.—Sometimes she just enters the edges of the western horizon, and drops us a ceremonious visit. Within a while, she sets out on her nightly tour, from the opposite regions of the east; traverses the whole *hemisphere*: and never offers to withdraw, till the more refulgent partner of her sway renders her presence unnecessary.—In a word, she is, while conversant among us, still waxing or waning, and “never continueth in “one stay.”

Such is the moon; and such are all *sublunary things*: exposed to perpetual vicissitudes. How often, and how soon, have the faint echoes of

* Alluding to those truly poetical lines in *Milton*,

“Hither, as to their fountain, other stars

“Repairing, in their golden urns draw light.”

Par. Lost. B. VII. line 364.

renown slept in silence, or been converted into the clamours of obloquy ! The same lips, almost with the same breath, cry Hosanna, and Crucify. —Have not *riches* confessed their notorious treachery, a thousand and a thousand times ? either melting away, like snow in our hands, by insensible degrees ; or escaping like a winged prisoner from its cage, with a precipitate flight. —Have we not known the bridegroom's *closet* an antichamber to the *tomb* ? and heard the voice, which so lately pronounced the sparkling pair husband and wife, proclaim an everlasting divorce ; and seal the decree with that solemn asseveration, " Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ? " —Our *friends*, though the medicine of life ; our *health*, though the balm of Nature ; are a most precarious possession. How soon may the first become a corpse in our arms ; and how easily is the last destroyed in its vigour ! —You have seen, no doubt, a set of pretty *painted birds*, perching on your trees, or sporting in your meadows. You was pleased with the lovely visitants, that brought beauty on their wings, and melody in their throats. But could you insure the *continuance* of this agreeable entertainment ? No, truly. At the least disturbing noise, at the least terrifying appearance, they start from their seats ; they mount the skies, and are gone in an instant, are gone for ever. Would you chuse to have a happiness, which bears date with their arrival, and expires at their departure ? If you could not be content with a portion, enjoyable only through such a *fortui-*

ious term, not of years, but of moments, O! take up with nothing earthly; set your affections on things above; there alone is "no variability or shadow of turning."

Job is not a more illustrious pattern of patience, than an eminent exemplification of this remark.—View him in his *private estate*. He heaps up silver as the dust; he washes his steps in butter, and the rock pours him out rivers of oil.—View him in his *public character*. Princes revere his dignity; the aged listen to his wisdom; every eye beholds him with delight; every tongue loads him with blessings.—View him in his *domestic circumstances*. On one hand, he is defended by a troop of sons; on the other, adorned with a train of daughters; and on all sides surrounded by "a very great household."—Never was human felicity so consummate; never was *disastrous revolution* so sudden. The lightning, which consumed his cattle, was not more terrible, and scarce more instantaneous. The joyful parent is bereft of his offspring, and his "children are buried in death." The man of affluence is stript of his abundance; and he, who was clothed in scarlet, embraces the dunghill. The venerable patriarch is the derision of scoundrels; and the late darling of an indulgent Providence is become "a brother to dragons, a companion of owls."—Nor need we go back to former ages for proofs of this afflicting truth. In our times, in all times, the wheel continues the same incessant whirl. And frequently those who are triumphing to-day in

the highest *elevations* of joy, to-morrow are be-moaning the instability of mortal affairs, in the very *depths* of misery *.—Amidst so much fluctuation and uncertainty, how wretched is the condition, which has no anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast! May thy loving kindness, O God, be our present treasure; and thy future glory our reversionary inheritance! Then shall our happiness not be like the full-orbed moon, which is “a light that *decreaseth* in its perfection;” but like the sun, when he goeth forth in his strength, and knoweth no other change, but that of *shining more* and more, unto the perfect day.

METHINKS, in this ever-varying sphere, I see a representation, not only of our temporal advantages, but also of our *spiritual accomplish-*

* I believe, I may venture to apply, what the *Temanite* says of the affairs of the wicked, to all sublunary things, as a true description of their very *great instability*. Job xxii. 16. נהר דגק יסודם, rendered by *Schaltens*, *Flumen fusum fundamentum eorum*. Their foundation (or what they reckon their most solid and stable possession) is a flood poured out.—Which is one of the boldest images, and most poetical beauties, I ever met with in any language, sacred or profane. In order to have a tolerable conception of the image, and a taste of its beauty, you must suppose a *torrent* of waters, rushing in broken cataracts, and with impetuous rapidity, from a steep and craggy mountain. Then imagine to yourself an *edifice*, built upon the surge of this rolling precipice; which has no other basis than one of those headlong *whirling waves*. Was there ever such a representation of transitory prosperity, tending, with inconceivable swiftness, unto ruin? Yet such is every form of human felicity, that is not grounded on *JESUS*, and a participation of his merits, who is the *Rock of Ages*; on *JESUS*, and his image formed in our hearts, which is the *hope of glory*.

ments. Such, I am sure, is what the kind partiality of a friend would call *my righteousness*: and such, I am apt to suspect*, is the righteousness of every man living. Now we exercise it, in some few instances, in some little degrees. Anon sin revives, and leads our souls into a transient, though unwilling, captivity. Now we are *meek*; but soon a ruffling accident intervenes, and turns our composure into a fretful disquietude. Now we are *humble*; soon we reflect upon some inconsiderable or imaginary superiority over others, and a sudden elatement swells our minds. Now, perhaps, we possess a clean heart, and are warm with holy love.

* I would not be understood, as measuring, in this respect, *others by myself*, but as taking my estimate from the unerring standard of Scripture. And indeed, proceeding on this evidence, supported by this authority, I might have ventured farther than a bare *suspicion*. For "there is not a *just* man upon earth, that doeth good, and *sinneth not*," says the Spirit of inspiration by Solomon. (*Eccles. vii. 20.*)—Nay, such is the purity, and so extensive are the demands, of the divine law, that an apostle makes a still more humbling acknowledgment; "In *many* things we offend *all*." (*James iii. 2.*)—And the unerring Teacher, who most thoroughly knew our frame, directs the most advanced, most established, and most watchful Christians, to pray daily for the forgiveness of their *daily trespasses*.—To which testimonies, I beg leave to add an elegant passage from the *Canticles*; because it not only expresses the sentiment of this paragraph, but illustrates it by the very same similitude. *She* (the Church) *is fair as the moon; clear as the sun.* Fair as the moon, the lesser and changeable light, in her *sanctification*; clear as the sun, the greater and invariable luminary, in her *justification*: the inherent holiness of believers being imperfect, and subject to many inequalities; while their imputed righteousness is every way complete, and constantly like itself. *Cant. vi. 10.*

But, O! how easily is the purity of our affections sullied! how soon the fervour of our gratitude cooled! And is there not something amiss even in our best moments? something to be *ashamed* of, in all we *are*; something to be *repented* of, in all we *do*?

With what gladness, therefore, and adoring thankfulness, should we “submit to the righteousness of our incarnate God;” and *receive*, as a divine gift, what cannot be *acquired* by human works *!—A writer of the first distinction, and nicest discernment, styles the obedience of our glorious Surety, an *everlasting righteousness* †. Such as was subject to no interruption, nor obscured by the least blemish; but proceeded always in the same uniform tenor, of the most spotless perfection.—This righteousness, in another sense, answers the prophet’s exalted description: as its beneficial and sovereign efficacy knows no end; but lasts through all our life; lasts in the trying hour of death; lasts at the decisive day of judgment; lasts through every generation; and will last to all eternity.

SOMETIMES I have seen that resplendent globe *stript* of her *radiance*; or, according to the emphatical language of Scripture, “turned into blood.” The earth interposing with its opaque body, intercepted the solar rays, and cast its own gloomy shadow on the moon. The malignant influence gained upon her sickening orb; extinguished, more and more, the feeble remainders of light; till at length, like one in

* Rom. v. 17. & x. 3. † Dan. ix. 24.

a deep swoon, no comeliness was left in her countenance; she was totally overspread with darkness.—At this juncture, what a multitude of eyes were gazing upon the rueful spectacle! even of those eyes which disregarded the empress of the night, or beheld her with indifference, when, robed in glory, and riding in her triumphal chariot, she shed a softer day through the nations. But now, under these circumstances of disgrace, they watch her motions with the most prying attention. In every place, her misfortune is the object of general observation; and the prevailing topic of discourse in every company.

Is it not this with regard to *persons* of eminence, in their respective spheres! Kings, at the head of their subjects; nobles, surrounded with their dependents; and (after names of so much grandeur, may I be allowed to add?) ministers labouring among their people*; are each in a conspicuous station. Their conduct, in its minutest step, especially in any *miscarriage*, will be narrowly surveyed, and critically scanned. Can there be a louder call to ponder the paths of their feet, and to be particularly jealous over all their ways?—Those who move in inferior life may grossly offend, and little alarm be given; perhaps no notice taken. But it is not to be expected that the least slip in *their* carriage, the least flaw in *their* character, will pass undiscovered. Malice, with her eagle eyes, will be sure to

* *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.* Matth. v. 14.

discern them; while *Censure*, with her shrill trumpet, will be as far from concealing them, as *Calumny*, with her treacherous whispers, from extenuating them! A planet may sink below the horizon; or a star, for several months, withdraw its shining; and scarce one in ten thousand perceive the loss. But, if the moon suffers a transient eclipse, almost half the world are spectators of her dishonour.

Very different was the case, when, at this late hour, I have taken a solitary walk on the *western cliffs*. At the foot of the steep mountain, the sea, all clear and smooth, spread itself into an immense plain, and held a watery mirror to the skies. Infinite heights above, the firmament stretched its azure expanse, bespangled with unnumbered stars, and adorned with the moon, "walking in brightness*." She seemed to contemplate herself, with a peculiar pleasure, while the *transparent surface* both received and returned her *silver image*. Here, instead of being covered with sackcloth, she shone with double lustre; or rather, with a lustre multiplied, in proportion to the number of beholders, and their various situations.

Such, methinks, is the effect of an exemplary behaviour in persons of exalted rank. Their course, as it is nobly distinguished, so it will be happily *influential*. Others will catch the diffusive ray; and be ambitious to resemble a pattern so attracting, so commanding. Their amiable qualities will not terminate in them.

* Job xxxi. 26.

selves; but we shall see them *reflected* from their families, their acquaintance, their retainers. Just as we may now behold another moon, trembling in the stream *, glittering in the canal, and displaying its lovely impress on every collection of waters.

THE moon, philosophy says, is a sort of *sovereign* over the *great deep*. Her orb, like a royal sceptre, sways the ocean, and actuates the fluid realms. It swells the tides, and perpetuates the reciprocal returns of ebb and flow. By which means the liquid element purges off its filth; and is preserved from being putrefied itself, and from poisoning the world.—Is the moon thus *operative* on the vast abyss? And shall not the faith of eternal and infinite delights to come be equally efficacious on this soul of mine?—Far above her argent fields are treasures of *happiness*, unseen by mortal eye, by mortal ear unheard, and unconceived by any human imagination. In that desirable world, the most distinguished and exalted *honours* also are conferred; in comparison with which, the thrones and diadems of earthly monarchs are empty pageants, and childish toys.—Yonder arch of sapphire, with all its spangles of gold, is but the floor of those divine abodes. What then are the apartments; what is the palace! how bright with glories; how rich with bliss!

O ye Mansions of blessedness, ye Beauties of my Father's kingdom; which far outshine these lamps of the visible heaven; transmit your sweet

* "Splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus." VIRG.

and winning invitations to my heart. *Attract* and *refine* all my affections. Withdraw them from *stagnating* on the sordid shores of flesh; never suffer them to settle upon the impure lees of sense; but impress them with *emotions* of restless desire after sublime and celestial joys:—Joys, that will proceed, still proceed in a copious and everlasting flow, when seas shall cease to roll:—Joys, that will charm every faculty with unimaginable pleasure; when the moon, with her waxing splendours, shall cheer our sight no more.

ENOUGH for the present evening. My thoughts have been sufficiently exercised, and my steps begin to be attended with weariness. Let me obey the admonition of Nature; and give respite to my meditations, slumber to my eyes.—But stay.—Shall I retire to the bed of sleep, with as little ceremony, and with as much inattention, as the brutes to their sordid lair? Are no *acknowledgments* due to that divine Being, who is the support of my life, and the length of my days? Have I no farther need of his *protecting* care; no more occasion for the blessings of his goodness?—*Lepidus*, perhaps, may laugh at the bended knee; and have a thousand darts of raillery ready to discharge on the practice of devotion. The wits, I know, are unmercifully severe on what *they* call the drudgery of prayer, and the phantastical rant of praise. These they leave to the illiterate labourer, and the mean mechanic; or treat them with a contemptuous sneer, as the parsons' ignoble trade.

Is it then an instance of *superstitious* blindness to distinguish; or of *whimsical* zeal to celebrate, the most supereminent excellency and merit? Is it an *ungraceful* business, or does it argue a *grovelling* disposition, to magnify goodness transcendently rich and diffusive?—What can be so truly becoming a *dependent state*, as to pay our adoring homage to the Author of all perfection, and profess our devoted allegiance to the supreme almighty Governor of the universe?—Can any thing more significantly bespeak an *ingenuous temper*, or administer a more real satisfaction to its finest feelings, than the exercises of penitential devotion? by which we give vent to an honest anguish, or melt into filial sorrow, for our insensibility to the best of friends, for our disobedience to the best of parents.—In a word, can there be a more *sublime pleasure* than to dwell, in fixed contemplation, on the beauties of the eternal Mind; the amiable original of all that is fair, grand, and harmonious; the beneficent Giver of all that is convenient, comfortable, and useful?—Can there be a more *advantageous employ*, than to present our requests to the Father of mercies; opening our minds to the irradiations of his wisdom, and all the faculties of our souls to the communications of his grace?—It is strange, unaccountably strange, that the notion of *dignity* in sentiment, and the pursuit of *refined* enjoyment, should ever be disunited from devotion: that persons, who make pretensions to an improved taste, and exalted genius, should

neglect this most ennobling intercourse with the wisest and best of Beings, the inexhaustible Source of honour and joy.

Shall I be deterred from approaching this Source of the purest delight? deterred from pursuing this highest improvement of my nature? deterred from all by a *formidable* banter, or confuted by one *irrefragable* smile?—No: let the moon, in her resplendent sphere; and yonder pole, with all its starry train; witness, if I be silent even or morn; if I refrain to kindle in my heart, and breathe from my lips, the reasonable incense of praise; praise to that great and glorious God who formed the earth, and built the skies; who poured from his hand the watery world, and shed the all-surrounding air abroad.—“Thou also madest the night, Maker
 “ Omnipotent! and thou the day! which I,
 “ though less than the least of all thy mercies,
 “ have passed in safety, tranquillity, and com-
 “ fort.—When I was lost in the extravagance
 “ of dreams, or lay immersed in the insensibi-
 “ lity of sleep, thy hand recovered me from
 “ the temporary lethargy. Thy hand set a new,
 “ a delicately fine, edge on all my blunted
 “ *senses*; and strung my sinews with recruited
 “ vigour. When my thoughts were benumb-
 “ ed and stupefied, thy quickening influence
 “ roused them into activity; when they were
 “ disconcerted and wild, thy regulating influ-
 “ ence reduced them into order: refitting me at
 “ once, to relish the innocent entertainments
 “ of an *animal*, and to enjoy the sublime gra-

" tifications of a *rational*, capacity.—When
 " darkness covered the creation, at thy com-
 " mand the *sun* arose ; painted the flowers,
 " and distinguished every object ; gave light to
 " my feet, and gave Nature, with all her beau-
 " tiful scenes, to my eye.—To thee, O thou
 " God of my strength, I owe the *continuance*
 " of my being, and the *vivacity* of my consti-
 " tution. By thy sacred order, without any
 " consciousness of mine, the wheels of life
 " move, and the crimson fountain plays. *Over-*
 " ruled by thy exquisite skill, it transforms it-
 " self, by the nicest operations of an inexpli-
 " cable kind of chymistry, into a variety of the
 " finest secretions : which glide into the mus-
 " cles, and swell them for action ; or pour
 " themselves into the fluids, and repair their
 " incessant decays : which cause cheerfulness
 " to sparkle in the eye, and health to bloom
 " in the cheek.

" *Disastrous accidents*, injurious to the peace
 " of my mind, or fatal to the welfare of my
 " body, beset my paths. But thy faithfulness
 " and truth, like an impenetrable shield, guard-
 " ed me all around. Under this divine protec-
 " tion, I walked secure, amidst legions of *appa-*
 " *rent* perils ; and passed unhurt, through a
 " far greater multiplicity of *unseen* evils. Not
 " one of my bones was broken ; not a single
 " shaft grazed upon my ease ; even when the
 " eye that watched over me saw, in its wide sur-
 " vey, *thousands falling beside me*, in irrecover-
 " able ruin ; and *ten thousands* deeply wounded,

“ on my right hand.—If Sickness has, at any
 “ time, saddened my chamber, or Pain har-
 “ rowed my flesh; it was a *wholesome* discipline,
 “ and a *gracious* severity. The chastisement
 “ proved a sovereign medicine, to cure me of
 “ an immoderate fondness for this imperfect,
 “ troublesome state; and to quicken my desires
 “ after the unembittered enjoyments of my
 “ eternal home.—Has not thy munificence, un-
 “ wearied and unbounded, spread my *table*,
 “ and furnished it with the finest wheat; re-
 “ plenished it with marrow and fatness? While
 “ Temperance sweetened the bowl; Appetite
 “ seasoned the dish; Contentment and Grati-
 “ tude crowned the repast.—Has not thy kind-
 “ ness, O God of the families of *Israel*, preserv-
 “ ed my affectionate *relations*; who study, by
 “ their tender offices, to soften every care, and
 “ heighten every joy? Has not thy kindness
 “ given me valuable *friends*; whose presence
 “ is a cordial, to cheer me in a dejected hour;
 “ and whose conversation mingles improve-
 “ ment with delight?

“ When sin lay disguised amidst flowery
 “ scenes of pleasure; enlightened by thy wis-
 “ dom, I *discerned* the latent mischief; made
 “ resolute by thy grace, I *shunned* the luscious
 “ bane. If, through the impulse of sensuality,
 “ or the violence of passion, I have been hur-
 “ ried into the snare, and stung by the serpent;
 “ thy faithful admonitions have *recalled* the
 “ foolish wanderer; while the blood of thy
 “ Son has *healed* his deadly wounds.—Some,

" no doubt, have been cut off in the midst of
" their iniquities; and transmitted from the
" thrillings of polluted joy to the agonies of
" eternal despair: whereas I have been dis-
" tinguished by long-suffering mercy; and, in-
" stead of lifting up my eyes in torments, to
" behold a heaven irrecoverably lost; I may
" lift them up under the pleasing views of be-
" ing admitted, ere long, into those abodes of
" endless felicity.—In the mean time, thou
" hast vouchsafed me the *revelation* of thy will;
" the influences of thy *Spirit*; and abundance
" of the most effectual *aids*, for advancing in
" knowledge, and growing in godliness; for
" becoming more conformable to thy image,
" and more meet for thy presence; for tasting
" the pleasures of religion, and securing the
" riches of eternity.

" How various is thy beneficence, O thou
" Lover of souls! It has unsealed a thousand
" sources of good; opened a thousand avenues
" of delight; and heaped blessings upon me,
" with a ceaseless liberality. If I should attempt
" to declare them, they would be more than
" the *starry* host, which glitter in this uncloud-
" ed sky; more than the *dewy* gems, which will
" adorn the face of the morning.

" AND shall I *forget* the GOD of my salva-
" tion, the Author of all my mercies? Rather
" let my pulse forget to beat!—Shall I render
" him *no* expressions of thankfulness? Then
" might all nature reproach my ingratitude.
" —Shall I rest satisfied with the *bare* acknow-

“ ledgment of my lips? No: let my life be
 “ vocal, and speak his praise, in that only ge-
 “ nuine, that most emphatical language,—the
 “ language of devout obedience. Let the *bill*
 “ be drawn upon my very heart; let all my
 “ affections *acknowledge* the draught; and let
 “ the whole tenor of my actions, in time and
 “ through eternity, be continually *paying* the
 “ debt,—the ever-pleasing, ever-growing debt
 “ of duty, veneration, and love.

“ And can I, O thou Guide of my goings,
 “ and Guardian of all my interests,—can I
 “ *distrust* such signal, such experienced good-
 “ ness? *Thou hast been my Helper*, through all
 “ the busy scenes of day; *therefore under the*
 “ *shadow of thy wings* will I repose myself, du-
 “ ring the darkness, the danger, and death-like
 “ inactivity of the night. Whatever defilement
 “ I have contracted, wash it thoroughly away in
 “ redeeming blood; and let neither the sinful
 “ stain, nor the sinful inclination, accompany
 “ me to my couch!—Then shall *I lay me down*
 “ *in peace, and take my rest*; cheerfully refer-
 “ ring it to thy all-wise determination, whether
 “ I shall open my eyes in *this* world, or awake
 “ in the unknown regions of *another*.”

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

STARRY HEAVENS.

There dwells a *noble pathos* in the skies,
Which warms our passions, proselytes our hearts.
How *eloquent* it shines the glowing pole!
With what authority it gives its charge,
Remonstrating *great truths* in style sublime!

Night-Thoughts, N^o IX.

THIS evening, I exchange the nice retreats
of Art for the noble theatre of Nature.
Instead of measuring my steps under the
covert of an arbour, let me range along the *sum-*
mit of this gently-rising hill. There is no need
of the leafy shade, since the sun has quitted the
horizon, and withdrawn his scorching beams.
But see how advantages and inconveniencies are
usually linked, and chequer our affairs below!
If the *annoying heat* ceases, the *landscape*, and
its pleasing scenes, are also removed.—The ma-
jestic castle, and the lowly cottage, are vanished
together. I have lost the aspiring mountain,
and its ruflet brow; I look round, but to no
purpose, for the humble vale, and its flowery
lap. The plains whitened with flocks, and the
heath yellow with furze, disappear. The advan-

cing Night has wrapt in darkness the long-extended forest, and drawn her mantle over the windings of the silver stream. I no longer behold that luxuriant fertility in the fields; that wild magnificence of prospect, and endless variety of images; which have so often touched me with delight, and struck me with awe, from this commanding eminence.

The loss, however, is scarcely to be regretted; since it is amply compensated by the opening beauties of the sky. Here I enjoy a free view of the whole hemisphere; without any obstacle from below, to confine the exploring eye; or any cloud from above, to overcast the spacious concave. 'Tis true, the lively vermilion, which so lately streaked the chambers of the west, is all faded. But the *planets*, one after another, light up their lamps; the *stars* advance in their glittering train; a thousand and a thousand luminaries shine forth in successive splendours; and the whole firmament is kindling into the most beautiful glow. The blueness of the æther, heightened by the season of the year, and still more enlivened by the *absence* of the moon, gives those gems of heaven the strongest lustre.

One pleasure more the invading gloom has not been able to snatch from my sense. The night rather improves, than destroys, the fragrance which exhales from the *blooming beans*. With these the sides of this sloping declivity are lined; and with these the balmy zephyrs perfume their wings. Does *Arabia*, from all her spicy groves, breathe a more liberal, or a

more charming gale of sweets? And, what is a peculiar recommendation of the rural entertainments presented in our happy land, they are alloyed by no apprehensions of danger. No poisonous serpent lurks under the blossom; nor any ravenous beast lies ready to start from the thicket.—But I wander from a far more exalted subject. My thoughts, like my affections, are too easily diverted from the heavens, and detained by inferior objects. Away, my attention, from these little blandishments of the earth; since all the *glories* of the *sky* invite thy regard.

WE have taken a turn among the *Tombs*, and viewed the solemn memorials of the dead; in order to learn the vanity of mortal things, and to break their soft enchantment.—We have surveyed the *ornaments* of the *Garden*; not that the heart might be planted in the parterre, or take root among the flowery race; but that these delicacies of a day might teach us to aspire after a better paradise, where beauty never fades, and delight is ever in the bloom.—A third time we lighted the candle of Meditation; and sought for wisdom, not in the crowded city or wrangling schools, but in the silent and lonely walks of ancient *Night**.—Let us once more indulge the contemplative vein, and raise our speculations to those *sublimar works*† of the

* Referring to the several subjects of the three preceding essays.

† Night opes the *noblest scenes*, and sheds an awe,
Which gives those venerable scenes full weight,
And deep reception in th' extender'd heart.

Night-Thoughts, N° IX.

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great Creator, which the regions of the sky contain, and this dusky hour unveils.

If we have discerned the touches of his pencil glowing in the colours of spring; if we have seen a sample of his beneficence exhibited in the stores of Nature, and a ray of his brightness beaming in the blaze of day; what an infinitely richer field for the display of his perfections are the heavens! The *heavens*, in the most emphatical manner, declare the glory of God. The heavens are nobly eloquent of the Deity, and the most magnificent heralds of their Maker's praise. They speak to the whole universe; for there is neither speech so *barbarous*, but their language is understood; nor nation so *distant*, but their voices are heard among them*.—

Let me then, in this solemn season, formed for thought, and a calm intercourse with Heaven; let me listen to their silent lectures. Perhaps, I may receive such impressive manifestations of "the eternal Power and Godhead," as may *shed* religion on my soul, while I walk the solitary shades; and may be a tutelary *friend* to my *virtue*, when the call of business, and the return of light, expose me again to the inroads of temptation.

THE *Israelites*, instigated by frenzy rather than devotion, worshipped the host of heaven. And the pretenders to *judicial astrology* talk of I know not what mysterious efficacy in the different aspect of the stars, or the various con-

* *Psal.* xix. 3.

THE STARRY HEAVENS. III

junction and opposition of the planets.—Let those who are unacquainted with the sure word of revelation give ear to these sons of delusion, and dealers in deceit. For my part, it is a question of indifference to me, whether the constellations shone with smiles, or frowned in frowns, on the hour of my nativity. Let CHRIST be my *guard*; and, secure in such a protection, I would laugh at their impotent menaces. Let CHRIST be my *guide*; and I shall scorn to ask, as well as despair of receiving, any predictory information from such senseless masses.—What! shall “the living seek to the dead*?” Can these bodies advertise me of future events, which are unconscious of their own existence? Shall I have recourse to dull unintelligent matter, when I may apply to that all-wise Being; who, with one comprehensive glance, distinctly views whatever is lodged in the bosom of Immensity, or forming in the womb of Futurity?—Never, never will I search for any intimations of my *fate*, but often trace my Creator’s *footsteps* †, in yon-

* *Isa. viii. 19.*

† “It is most becoming” (says a great author) “such imperfect creatures as we are, to contemplate the works of GOD, with *this* design, that we may discern the manifestations of wisdom in them; and thereby excite in ourselves those devout affections, and that superlative respect, which is the very essence of praise, as it is a reasonable and moral service.” ABERNETHY *on the Attributes*.—And, indeed, if we are sincerely disposed to employ ourselves in this excellent, this delightful, duty of praising the infinite Creator; the *means*, and the *motives*, are both at hand. His works, in a wonderful and instructive variety, present themselves with pregnant manifestations of the most transcendent excellencies of their Maker. They pour their evi-

der starry plains. In the former case, they would be teachers of lies; in the latter, they are oracles of truth. In this, therefore, this sense only, I profess myself the pupil of the stars.

THE vulgar are apprehensive of nothing more than a multitude of *bright spangles* dropt over the ethereal blue. They have no higher notion of these fine appearances, than that they are so many *golden studs*, with which the empyrean arch is decorated.—But studious minds, that carry a more accurate and strict inquiry among the celestial bodies, bring back advices of a most astonishing import. Let me just recollect the most material of those *stupendous discoveries*, in order to furnish out proper subjects for contemplation. And let the unlearned remember, that the scene I am going to display is the workmanship of that incomprehensible God, who is “perfect in knowledge, “and mighty in power:” whose name, whose nature, and all whose operations, are “great “and marvellous;” who summons into being, with equalease, a single grain, or ten thousand worlds.—To this, if we continually advert, the assertions, though they will certainly excite our *admiration*, need not transcend our belief.

dence from all quarters, and into all the avenues of the mind. They invite us, especially in the magnificent system of the universe, to contemplate—*counsel* consummately wise, and, *execution* inimitably perfect—*power*, to which nothing is impossible; and *goodness*, which extendeth to all, which endureth for ever—To give, not a full display, but only some *slight sketches*, of these glorious truths, is the principal scope of the following remarks.

THE earth, is in fact, a round body; however it may seem, in some parts. to be sunk into vales, and raised into hills *; in other parts, to be spread into a spacious plain, extending to the confines of the heavens, or terminated by the waters of the ocean.—We may fancy, that it has deep foundations, and rests upon some prodigiously solid basis. But it is *pendent* in the wide transpicious æther, without any visible cause to uphold it from above, or support it from beneath.—It may seem to be sedentary in its attitude, and motionless in its situation. But it is continually *sailing* †, through the depths of the sky; and, in the space of twelve months, finishes the mighty voyage Which periodical rotation produces the seasons, and completes the year.—As it proceeds in the annual circuit, it *spins* upon its own *centre*; and turns its sides alternately to the fountain of light. By which

* A learned writer, I think, Dr *Nerham*, has, somewhere, an observation to this purpose:—That the loftiest *summits* of hills, and the most enormous *ridges* of mountains, are no real objection to the *globular* or round form of the earth. Because, however they may render it, to our limited sight, vastly uneven and protuberant; yet they bear no more proportion to the *entire* surface of the terraqueous ball, than a *particle* of dust, casually dropt on the mathematician's globe, bears to its whole circumference. Consequently, the rotund figure is no more destroyed in the former case than in the latter.—On the same principle, I have not thought it necessary to take any notice of the comparatively small difference between the *polar* and *equatorial* diameter of the earth.

† With what amazing *speed* this vessel (if I may carry on the allusion) filled with a multitude of nations, and freighted with all their possessions, makes her way through the æthereal space; see page 134, in a note.

means the *day* dawns in one hemisphere ; while the night succeeds in the other. Without this expedient, one part of its regions would, during half the great revolution, be scorched with excessive heat, or languish under an unintermitted glare : while the other, exposed to the contrary extremes, would be frozen to ice, and buried under a long oppression of dismal and destructive darkness.

I cannot forbear taking notice, that, in this compound motion of the earth, the one never *interferes* with the other, but both are perfectly *compatible*. Is it not thus with the precepts of religion, and the needful affairs of the present life ; not excepting even the innocent gratifications of our appetites ?—Some, I believe, are apt to imagine, that they must renounce society, if they devote themselves to CHRIST ; and abandon all the satisfactions of *this* world, if they once become zealous candidates for the felicity of *another*.—But this is a very mistaken notion, or else a very injurious representation, of the doctrine which is according to godliness. It was never intended to drive men into deserts ; but to lead them through the peaceful and pleasant paths of wisdom, into the blissful regions of life eternal. It was never intended to strike off the wheels of Business, or cut in sunder the sinews of Industry ; but rather, to make men industrious from a principle of *conscience*, not from the instigations of *avarice* ; that so they may promote their immortal happiness, even while they provide for their temporal main-

THE STARRY HEAVENS. 115

tenance. It has no design to extirpate our passions, but only to restrain their irregularities; neither would it extinguish the delights of sense, but prevent them from evaporating into vanity, and subsiding into gall.—A person may be cheerful among his friends, and yet joyful in God. He may taste the sweets of his earthly estate; and, at the same time, cherish his hopes of a nobler inheritance in heaven. The *trader* may prosecute the demands of commerce, without neglecting to negotiate the affairs of his salvation. The *warrior* may wear his sword; may draw, in a just cause, that murderous weapon; yet be a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST, and obtain the crown that fadeth not away. The *parent* may lay up a competent portion for his children, and not forfeit his title to the treasures, either of grace or of glory.—So far is Christianity from obstructing any valuable interest, or withholding any real pleasure; that it improves the one, and advances the other. Just as the diurnal and annual motions are so far from *clashing*, that they entirely *accord*; and instead of being destructive of each other, by mutually blending their effects, they give proportion and harmony to time, fertility and innumerable benefits to nature.

TO us, who dwell on its surface, the earth is by far the *most extensive* orb, that our eyes can, any where, behold. It is also clothed with verdure; distinguished by trees; and adorned with a variety of beautiful decorations. Whereas, to a spectator placed on one of the planets,

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it wears an uniform aspect ; looks all luminous, and *no larger* than a spot. To beings who dwell at still greater distances it entirely disappears.—That which we call, alternately, the morning and the evening star ; as, in one part of her orbit she rides foremost in the procession of night ; in the other, ushers in and anticipates the dawn ; is a *planetary world*. Which, with the four others, that so wonderfully vary their mystic dance, are in themselves dark bodies, and shine only by reflection ; have fields, and seas, and skies, of their own ; are furnished with all accommodations for *animal* subsistence, and are supposed to be the abodes of *intellectual* life. All which, together with this our earthly habitation, are dependent on that grand dispenser of divine munificence, the sun ; receive their light from the distribution of his rays and derive their comforts from his benign agency.

THE *sun*, which seems to perform its daily stages through the sky, is, in this respect *, *fixed* and immoveable. 'Tis the great axle of heaven, about which the globe we inhabit, and other more spacious orbs, wheel their stated courses —The sun, though seemingly *smaller* than the *dial* it illuminates, is abundantly *larger* than this whole *earth* † ; on which so ma-

* I say, *in this respect* ; that I may not seem to forget, or exclude, the revolution of the sun round its own axis.

† A hundred thousand times, according to the *lowest* reckoning. Sir ISAAC NEWTON computes the sun to be 900,000 times bigger than the earth. *Religious Philosopher*, p. 749.

ny lofty mountains rise, and such vast oceans roll. A line, extending from side to side, thro' the centre of that resplendent orb, would measure more than eight hundred thousand miles; a girdle, formed to go round its circumference, would require a length of millions: were its solid contents to be estimated, the account would overwhelm our understanding, and be almost beyond the power of language to express *.—Are we startled at these reports of philosophy? Are we ready to cry out, in a transport of surprise, How *mighty* is the Being, who kindled such a prodigious fire; and keeps alive, from age to age, such an enormous mass of flame! Let us attend our philosophic guides, and we shall be brought acquainted with speculations more enlarged and more amazing.

This sun, with all its attendant planets, is but a very little part of the grand machine of the universe. Every *star*, though, in appearance, no bigger than the diamond that glitters upon a lady's ring, is really a *vast globe*, like the sun in size, and in glory no less spacious, no less luminous, than the radiant source of our day. So that every star is, not barely a world, but the *centre* of a magnificent system: has a retinue

* Dr. DERHAM, after having calculated the dimensions of the planets, adds, "Amazing as these masses are, they are all far outdone by that stupendous globe of light, the sun; which, as it is the fountain of light and heat to all the planets about it, so doth it far surpass them all in its bulk: its apparent diameter being computed at 822,248 *English* miles, its ambit at 2,582,873 miles, and its solid contents at 290,971,000,000,000,000." *Astro-Theol.* B. I. chap. II.

of worlds irradiated by its beams, and revolving round its attractive influence. All which are lost to our sight, in unmeasurable wilds of æther.—That the stars appear like so many diminutive, and scarce distinguishable *points*, is owing to their immense and inconceivable distance. Immense and inconceivable indeed it is; since a ball, shot from the loaded cannon, and flying, with unabated rapidity, must travel, at this impetuous rate, almost seven hundred thousand years *, before it could reach the *nearest* of those twinkling luminaries.

Can any thing be more wonderful than these observations? Yes: there are truths far more stupendous; there are scenes far more extensive. As there is no end of the almighty Maker's greatness; so no imagination can set limits to his creating hand.—Could you soar beyond the moon, and pass through all the planetary choir; could you wing your way to the highest apparent star, and take your stand on one of those loftiest pinnacles of heaven; you would there see *other skies* expanded; *another sun*, distributing his inexhaustible beams by day; *other stars* that gild the horrors of the alternate night: and *other*, perhaps nobler, *systems* †, established,

* See *Religious Philosopher*, p. 819.

† See *Astro-Theol.* B. II. chap. II. — Where the author, having assigned various reasons to support this theory of our *modern astronomers*, adds,—“ Besides the forementioned strong probabilities, we have this farther recommendation of such an account of the universe, that it is far more magnificent, and worthy of the infinite Creator, than any other of the narrower schemes.”

in unknown profusion, through the boundless dimensions of space. Nor does the dominion of the universal Sovereign terminate *there*. Even at the end of this vast tour you would find yourself advanced no farther than the suburbs of creation; arrived only at the frontiers of the great JEHOVAH's kingdom *.

And do they tell me, that the sun, the moon, and all the planets, are but a little part of HIS works? *How great, then, are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders †!*—And if so, what is the CREATOR himself! How far exalted above all praise! who is so *high*, that he looks down on the highest of these dazzling spheres, and sees even the summit of creation in a vale: so *great*, that this prodigious extent of space is but a point in his presence; and all this confluence of worlds as the lightest atom that fluctuates in air, and sports in the meridian ray ‡.

* *Job*, after a most beautiful dissertation on the mighty works of GOD, as they are distributed through universal nature, from the heights of heaven to the very depths of hell, closes the magnificent account with this acknowledgment; *Lo! these are parts of his ways*. Or, as the original word more literally signifies, and may, I think, be more elegantly rendered, these are only *the skirts*, the very outermost borders, of his works. No more than a small preface to the immense volume of the creation.—From the Hebrew קצרת, *extremities*. I cannot forbear thinking on the extreme and very attenuated *fibres* of the root, when compared with the whole substance of the *trunk*; or on the exquisitely small size of the *capillary vessels*, when compared with the whole structure of the body. *Job* xxvi. 14.

† *Dan.* iv. 3.

‡ This puts me in mind of a very fine remark on a scriptural beauty, and a solid correction of the common trans-

Thou most sublime and incomprehensibly glorious GOD, how am I overwhelmed with awe! how sunk into the lowest prostration of mind! when I consider thy "*excellent greatness*," and my own utter insignificancy!—And have I, excessively mean as I am, have I entertained any *conceited apprehensions* of myself? Have I felt the least elatement of thought, in the presence of so majestic and adorable a Being? How should this wound me with sorrow, and cover me with confusion!—O my GOD, was I possessed of all the *high perfections* which accomplish and adorn the angels of light; amidst all these noble endowments, I would fall down in the *deepest abasement* at thy feet. Lost in the infinitely superior blaze of thy uncreated glories, I would confess myself to be nothing; to

lation, made by that learned, sagacious, and devout expounder *Vitriaga* — *Is. xl. 15.* we find it written of the Supreme Being, that *he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.* Which, our critic observes, is neither answerable to the import of the original, nor consonant to the structure of the discourse. The prophet had no intention to inform mankind what the Almighty could do with regard to the islands, if he pleased to exert uncontrollable power. His design was to shew how insignificant, or rather what mere nothings *they are*, in his esteem, and before his majesty.—The islands, says he, though so *spacious*, as to afford room for the erection of kingdoms, and the abode of nations; though so *strong*, as to withstand, for many thousands of years, the raging and reiterated assaults of the whole watery world; are yet, before the adored JEHOVAH, *small* as the minutest grain, which the eye can scarce discern; *light* as the feathered mote, which the least breath hurries away like a tempest?—אֵימָם בְּדָק יִטָּל *Infula sunt ut leve quid, quod avolat.* The deep-rooted islands are as the volatile atom, which, by the gentlest undulations of the air, is waisted to and fro in perpetual agitation.

be less than nothing, and vanity.—How much more ought I to maintain the most unfeigned humiliation before thy divine Majesty; who am not only dust and ashes, but a compound of ignorance, imperfection, and depravity!

WHILE, beholding this vast expanse, I learn my own extreme meanness, I would also discover the abject littleness of all *terrestrial things*.—What is the earth, with all her ostentatious scenes, compared with this astonishingly grand furniture of the skies! What, but a dim *speck*, hardly perceivable in the map of the universe? It is observed, by a very judicious writer *, That if the sun himself, which enlightens this part of the creation, was extinguished; and all the host of planetary worlds, which move about him, were annihilated; they would not be missed, by an eye that can take in the whole compass of Nature, any more than a grain of sand upon the sea-shore. The bulk of which they consist, and the space which they occupy, is so exceedingly little in comparison of the whole, that their loss would scarce leave a blank in the immensity of God's works.—If then, not our globe only, but this whole system, be so very diminutive; what is a kingdom, or a country? What are a few *lordships*, or the so-much-admired *patrimonies* of those who are styled Wealthy †? When I measure them with my own little pittance, they swell into proud and bloated

* SPECT. Vol. VIII. N^o 565.

† “Juvat inter sidera vagantem divitum pavimenta ridere, et totam cum auro suo terram.” SEN.

dimensions. But, when I take the universe for my standard, how scanty is their size, how contemptible their figure ! They shrink into *pompous nothings* *.

When the keen-eyed eagle soars above all the feathered race, and leaves their very sight below ; when she wings her way, with direct ascent, up the steep of heaven ; and, steadily gazing on the meridian sun, accounts its beaming splendours all her own : does she then regard, with any solicitude, the *mote* that is flying in the air, or the *dust* which she shook from her feet ? And shall this eternal mind, which is capable of contemplating its Creator's glory ; which is intended to enjoy the visions of his countenance ; shall this *eternal mind*, endued with such great capacities, and made for such exalted ends, be so *ignobly ambitious*, as to fight for the tinsels of state ; or so *poorly covetous*, as to grasp after ample territories on a needle's point ?—No ; under the influence of such considerations, I feel my sentiments expand, and my wishes acquire a turn of sublimity. My throbbing desires after worldly grandeur die away ; and I find myself, if not possessed of power, yet superior to its charms.—Too long, must I own, have my affections been pinioned by vanity, and immured in this earthly clod. But these thoughts break the *shackles* †. These

* *Terrellæ grandia inania.* WATTS'S *Hor. Lyr.*

† The soul of man was made to walk the skies,
Delightful outlet of her prison here !
There, disencumber'd from her chains, the ties
Of toys terrestrial, she can rove at large ;

objects open the door of *liberty*. My soul, fired by such noble prospects, weighs anchor from this little nook; and coasts no longer about its contracted shores; dotes no longer on its painted shells. The *immensity* of things is her range; and an *infinity* of bliss is her aim.

BEHOLD this immense expanse, and admire the *condescension* of thy GOD.—In this manner, an inspired and princely astronomer improved his survey of the nocturnal heavens. *When I consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; I am smitten with wonder at thy glory, and cry out in a transport of gratitude, LORD, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him*?* “How amazing, how
 “charming, is that divine benignity, which is
 “pleased to bow down its sacred regards to so
 “foolish and worthless a creature! yea, dis-
 “dains not, from the height of infinite exalta-
 “tion, to extend its kind providential care to
 “our most minute concerns!—This is amazing.
 “But that the everlasting Sovereign should
 “give his Son, to be made flesh, and become
 “our Saviour! shall I call it a *miracle* of con-
 “descending goodness? Rather, what are all
 “miracles, what are all mysteries, to this in-
 “effable gift!”

Had the *brightest archangel* been commissioned to come down, with the olive-branch of peace

There freely can respire, dilate, extend,
 In full proportion let loose all her pow'rs.

Night-Thoughts, N° IX.

* *Psal.* viii. 3, 4.

in his hand, signifying his eternal Maker's readiness to be reconciled; on our bended knees, with tears of joy, and a torrent of thankfulness, we ought to have received the transporting news. But when, instead of such an angelic envoy, he sends his *only-begotten Son*, his Son beyond all thought illustrious, to make us the gracious overture:—sends him, from the “habitation of his holiness and glory,” to put on the *infirmities* of mortality, and dwell in a tabernacle of clay:—sends him, not barely to make us a transient visit, but to abide *many years* in our inferior and miserable world:—sends him, not to exercise dominion over monarchs, but to wear out his life in the ignoble form of a *servant*; and, at last, to make his exit under the infamous character of a *malefactor*! Was ever love like this? Did ever grace stoop so low*?—Should

* This reminds me of a very noble piece of *sacred oratory*, where, in a fine series of the most beautiful gradations, the Apostle displays the admirably condescending kindness of our Saviour.—*He thought it no robbery*, it was his indisputable right, *to be equal with the infinite, self-existent, immortal GOD*. Yet, in mercy to sinners, *he emptied himself of the incommunicable honours, and laid aside the robes of incomprehensible glory*.—When he entered upon his mediatorial state, instead of acting in the grand capacity of universal Sovereign, he *took upon him the form of a servant*: and not the form of those ministering spirits, whose duty is dignity itself; who are throned, though adoring.—He took not on him the nature of angels, but stooped incomparably low; assumed a body of animated dust, and was made in the likeness of men; those inferior and depraved creatures.—Astonishing condescension! but not sufficient for the overflowing riches of the Redeemer's love. For, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself farther still; occupied the lowest place, where all was low and ignoble. He not only submitted to

the sun be shorn of all his radiant honours, and degraded into a *clod* of the vallies; should all the dignitaries of heaven be deposed from their thrones, and degenerate into *insects* of a day; great, great would be the abasement. But *nothing* to thine, most blessed JESUS; *nothing* to thine, thou Prince of peace; when, for us men, and for our salvation, thou didst not abhor the coarse accommodations of the *manger*; thou didst not decline even the gloomy horrors of the *grave*.

'Tis well, the sacred oracles have given this doctrine the most explicit confirmation, and evidence quite incontestable. Otherwise, a favour so undeserved, so unexpected, and rich beyond all imagination, might stagger our belief.—Could HE, who launches all these planetary globes through the illimitable void; and leads them on, from age to age, in their extensive career; could HE resign his hands, to be *confined* by the girding cord, and his back to be *ploughed* by the bloody scourge?—Could HE, who crowns all the stars with inextinguishable *brightness*, be himself defiled with *spitting*, and disfigured with the thorny scar? It is the greatest of wonders, and yet the surest of truths.

the yoke of the law, but also bore the infirmities, and ministered to the necessities, of mortals. He even washed the feet of others, and had not where to lay his own head.—Yea, he carried his meritorious humiliation to the very deepest degrees of possible abasement. He *became obedient unto death*;—and not to a common or natural death, but a death more infamous than the gibbet; more torturous than the rack; *even the accursed death of the cross.* Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.

O! ye mighty orbs, that roll along the spaces of the sky; I wondered, a little while ago, at your vast dimensions, and ample circuits. But now my amazement ceases; or rather, is entirely swallowed up by a much more stupendous subject. Methinks, your enormous bulk is shrivelled to an *atom*; your prodigious revolutions are contracted to a *span*; while I muse upon the far more elevated heights, and unfathomable depths; the infinitely more extended lengths, and unlimited breadths, of this *love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS* *.

CONTEMPLATING this stately expanse, I see a mirror, which represents, in the most awful colours, the *heinousness* of human guilt. — Ten thousand volumes, wrote on purpose to display the aggravations of my various acts of disobedience, could not so effectually convince me of their inconceivable enormity, as the consideration of that *all-glorious person* †, who, to make an atonement for them, spilt the last drop of his blood. — *I have sinned*, may every child of Adam say; and *what shall I do unto thee, O thou Observer of men* ‡? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Vain commutation! and such as would be rejected by the blessed GOD, with

* Eph. iii. 18, 19.

† “ Quo quisque altius ascendit in agnitione CHRISTI, eo profundius peccati atrocitatem cognoscet.”

‡ Job vii. 20. Not *preserver*, as it stands in our version, but *observer of men*. Which phrase, as it denotes the exact and incessant *inspection* of the divine eye; as it intimates the absolute impossibility that any transgression should *escape* the divine notice; is evidently most proper, both to assign the *reason*, and heighten the *emphasis*, of the context.

the utmost abhorrence.—Will all the *potentates*, that sway the sceptre in a thousand kingdoms, devote their royal and honoured lives, to rescue an obnoxious creature from the stroke of vengeance? Alas! it must cost more, incomparably more, to expiate the malignity of sin, and save a guilty wretch from hell.—Will all the *principalities* of *heaven* be content to assume my nature, and resign themselves to death for my pardon *? Even this would be too mean a satisfaction for inexorable justice; too scanty a re-

* MILTON sets this thought in a very poetical and striking light.—All the sanctities of heaven stand round the throne of the Supreme Majesty. GOD foresees and foretells the fall of man; the *ruin* which will unavoidably ensue on his transgression; and the utter *impossibility* of his being able to extricate himself from the abyfs of misery.

- “ He, with his whole posterity, must die;
- “ Die he, or justice must; unless for him
- “ Some other able, and as willing, pay
- “ The rigid satisfaction, death for death.”

After which affecting representation, intended to raise the most tender emotions of pity, the following inquiry is addressed to all the surrounding angels:

- “ Say, heav’nly Powers, where shall we find such love?
- “ Which of you will be mortal, to redeem
- “ Man’s mortal crime? and die, the dead to save?
- “ He ask’d: but all the heav’nly choir stood mute,
- “ And silence was in heav’n.” —

There is, to me at least, an inimitable spirit and beauty in the last circumstance.—That such an innumerable multitude of generous and compassionate beings should be struck dumb with surprise and terror, at the very mention of the *deadly forfeiture and ransom set!* No language is so eloquent as this *silence*. Words could not possibly have expressed, in so emphatical a manner, the *dreadful nature* of the task; the *absolute inability* of any or all creatures to execute it; the *supereminent and matchless love* of the eternal Son, in undertaking the tremendous work; not only without reluctance, but unsought and unimplored; with readiness, alacrity, and delight. *Par. Lost. B. III. l. 209.* edit. BENTLEY.

paration of God's injured honour. So flagrant is human guilt, that nothing but a victim of *infinite dignity* could constitute an adequate propitiation.—*He* who said, "Let there be light," "and there was light;" Let there be a firmament, and immediately the blue curtains floated in the sky; *He* must take flesh; *He* must feel the fierce torments of crucifixion; and pour out his soul in agonies, if ever such transgressors are pardoned.

How vast is that debt, which all the wealth of both the *Indies* cannot discharge! How vitiated that habit of body, which all the drugs produced by Nature herself cannot rectify! But how much more *ruined* was thy condition, O my soul! how much more *heinous* were thy crimes! Since nothing less than the sufferings and death of Messiah, the Son of God, and radiant image of his glory, could effect thy recovery, or cancel thy iniquity. Though perhaps thou art not sunk so very deep in pollution, as some of the most abandoned profligates; yet remember the inestimable ransom paid to redeem thee from everlasting destruction. Remember this; and "never open thy mouth "any more*," either to *murmur* at the divine chastisements, or to *glory* in thy own attainments. Remember this; and even "*loath* thyself † for the multitude of thy provocations," and thy great baseness.

ONCE more: let me view this beautiful, this magnificent expanse; and conceive some juster

* *Ezek. xvi. 63.* † *Ezek. l. xxxvi. 31.*

apprehensions of the unknown richness of my Saviour's atonement.—I am informed by a writer, who cannot mistake, that the High Priest of my profession, who was also the sacrifice for my sins, is *higher than the heavens* *; more exalted in dignity, more bright with glory, than all the heavenly mansions, and all their illustrious inhabitants. If my heart was humbled at the consideration of its excessive guilt, how do all my drooping powers revive at this delightful thought? The poor criminal, that seemed to be tottering on the very brink of the infernal pit, is raised, by such a belief, even to the portals of Paradise. My self-abasement, I trust, will always continue; but my fears, under the influence of such a conviction, are quite gone †. I do not, I cannot, doubt the efficacy

* Heb. vii. 26.

† I am sorry to find, that some of my readers were a little disgusted at this expression, "*My fears are quite gone*;" as thinking, it discovered a tincture of arrogance in the writer, and tended to discourage the weak Christian. But, I hope, a more mature consideration will acquit me from both these charges.—For what has the author said? Only, that at some *peculiarly happy moments*, when the Holy Ghost bears witness of CHRIST in his heart, and he is favoured with a glimpse of the Redeemer's matchless excellency;—that, in these *brighter intervals* of life, his trembling fears, with regard to the decisive sentence of the great tribunal, are turned into pleasing expectations. And what is there in such a declaration offensive to the *strict* modesty, or dispiriting to the *weakest* believer? Instead of creating discouragement, it points out the way to obtain a settled tranquillity. Its natural tendency is, to engage the serious mind in a more constant and attentive meditation on the unknown merits of the Divine MEDIATOR. And were we more *thoroughly* acquainted, more *deeply* affected, with this unat-

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of this propitiation. *While I see a glimpse of its matchless excellency, and verily believe myself interested in its merits; I know not what it is to feel any misgiving suspicions; but am steadfast in faith, and joyful through hope.*

Be my iniquities like debts of millions of talents, here is more than full payment for all that prodigious sum. Let the enemy of mankind, and accuser of the brethren, load me with invectives; this one plea, *A divine Redeemer died*, most thoroughly quashes every indictment. For, though there be much turpitude, and manifold transgressions, "there is no condemnation to those that are in CHRIST JESUS."—Nay, were I chargeable with all the vilest deeds, which have been committed in every age of the world, by every nation of men; even in this most deplorable case, I need not sink into despair. Even such guilt, though grievous beyond all expression, is not to be compared with that *abundance of grace and righteousness*, which dwell in the incarnate Divinity.—How great, how transcendently glorious, are the *perfections* of the adored JEHOVAH! So great, so superlatively precious, is the *expiation* of the dying JESUS. 'Tis impossible for the human mind to *exalt* this atonement too highly*; 'tis impossible for the HUMBLE PENITENT to *confide*

terable dignity; I am persuaded, our uneasy apprehensions would *proportionably* vanish; our faith be established, our hopes brightened, and our joys enlarged.

* This doctrine, though rich with *consolation* to the ruined sinner; yet is it not likely to open a door for *licentiousness*, and embolden transgressors to prosecute their VICES!

in it too steadily. The Scriptures, the Scriptures of eternal truth, have said it, (exult my soul, in the belief of it!), that the blood on which we rely, is GOD's *own blood**: and therefore all-sufficient to expiate, omnipotent to save.

David, that egregious sinner, but more exemplary saint, seems to have been well acquainted with this comfortable truth. What else can be the import of that very remarkable, but most devout, declaration? *Thou shalt purge † me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*.—"I have been guilty, I must confess, of the most complicated and shocking crimes: crimes, inflamed by every aggravating circumstance, with regard to myself, my neighbour, and my God. *Myself*, who have been blessed above men, and the distinguished favourite of Provi-

—No: it is the most powerful motive to that genuine repentance, which *flows* from an unfeigned love of GOD; and operates in a hearty detestation of all sin. One, who knew the unmeasurable goodness of the LORD, and was no stranger to the sinful perverseness of our nature, says, *There is mercy with thee: THEREFORE shalt thou be feared*. Psal. cxxx. 4.—Words full to my purpose; which at once add the *highest* authority to this sentiment, and direct our minds to its proper influence, and due improvement.

* *Acts* xx. 28.

† *Psal.* li. 7 *Thou shalt purge*. I prefer this translation before the new one. Because this speaks the language of a more steadfast belief, and gives the highest honour to the Divine goodness. Were the words intended to bear no more than the common *petitionary* sense, and not to be expressive of a noble *plerophory* of faith; they would rather have been אָנֹכִי וְכַסְפִּי, *imperatives*, not *futures*.

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“ dence ; *my neighbour*, who, in the most dear
 “ and tender interests, has been irreparably
 “ injured ; *my GOD*, who might justly expect
 “ the most grateful returns of duty, instead of
 “ such enormous violations of his law. Yet,
 “ all horrid and execrable as *my offence* is, it is
 “ nothing to the superabundant merit of that
 “ *great Redeemer*, who was promised from the
 “ foundations of the world ; in whom all my
 “ fathers trusted ; who is the hope of all the
 “ ends of the earth. Though my conscience
 “ be more loathsome, with adulterous impuri-
 “ ty, than the *dungbill* ; though treachery and
 “ murder have rendered it even black as the
 “ gloom of *hell* ; yet, washed in “ the fountain
 “ opened for sin and for uncleanness *,” I shall
 “ be,—I say not, pure only ; this were a dispa-
 “ ragement to the efficacy of my Saviour’s
 “ death ; but I shall be fair as the *lily*, and
 “ white as the snow. Nay, let me not derogate
 “ from the glorious object of my confidence ;
 “ cleansed by this sovereign sanctifying stream,
 “ I shall be *fairer* than the full-blown lily,
 “ *whiter* than the new-fallen snows.”

POWER, saith the Scripture, *belongeth unto*
GOD †.—And in what majestic lines is this at-
 tribute of *JEHOVAH* written, throughout the
 whole volume of the creation ! especially, thro’
 those magnificent pages unfolded in yonder
 starry regions ; which are therefore styled, by
 the sweet and seraphic Singer of *Israel*, “ the
 “ firmament of his power ‡ ;” because the

* *Zech.* xiii. 1.

† *Psal.* lxii. 11.

‡ *Psal.* cl. 1.

grand *exploits* of *Omnipotence* are there displayed with the utmost pomp, and recorded in the most legible characters.

Who, that looks upward to the midnight-sky; and, with an eye of reason, beholds its rolling wonders; who can forbear inquiring, Of *what* were those mighty orbs *formed*?—Amazing to relate! they were produced without materials. They sprung from emptiness itself. The stately fabric of universal nature emerged out of *nothing*.—What *instruments* were used by the supreme Architect, to fashion the parts with such exquisite niceness, and give so beautiful a polish to the whole? How was all connected into one finely-proportioned and nobly finished structure? A *bare Fiat* accomplished all. LET THEM BE, said GOD. He added no more; and immediately the marvellous edifice arose; adorned with every beauty; displaying innumerable perfections; and declaring, amidst enraptured seraphs, its great Creator's praise. “By the *word* of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the *breath* of his mouth*.”—What forceful machinery

* If this thought is admitted a second time, and suffered to ennoble the next paragraph; it is partly, because of its unequalled *sublimity*; partly, because it awakens the most grand idea of Creating power; and partly, because the practice of the *Psalmist*, an authority too great to be controverted, is my precedent.—The beautiful stanza quoted from *Psal.* xxxiii. 6. is a proof, how thoroughly the Royal poet entered into the majesty of the *Mosaic* narration. The repetition of the sentiment, *ver.* 9. intimates, how peculiarly he was charmed with that *noble manner* of describing the Divine operations. While the turn of his own com-

fixed some of those ponderous globes on an immoveable basis? What irresistible impulse *bowl-*
ed others through the circuit of the heavens? What coercive energy *confined* their impetuous courses within limits astonishingly large, yet most minutely true?—Nothing but his *sovereign will*. For all things were at first constituted, and all to this day abide, “according to
“his ordinance.”

Without any toilsome assiduity, or laborious process, to raise—to touch—to *speak*—such a multitude of immense bodies into being;—to *launch* them through the spaces of the sky, as an arrow from the hand of a giant;—to impress on such *unwieldy* masses a motion far outstripping the swiftness of the winged creation*;—and to *continue* them in the same rapid whirl, for thousands and thousands of years;—what

position shews, how perfectly he possessed the same *elevated way* of thinking. And this, long before *Longinus* wrote the celebrated treatise, which has taught the Heathen, as well as the Christian, world, to admire the *dignity* of the *Jewish* legislator's style. *Vid. LONGIN. de Sublim. §. 9.*

* To give *one* instance of this remark.—The earth, in the diurnal revolution, which it performs on its own axis, *whirls about* at the rate of above a thousand miles an hour. And as the great orbit which it describes annually round the sun is reckoned at 540 millions of miles, it must *travel* near a million and a half each day.—What a *force* must be requisite to protrude so vast a globe; and wheel it on, loaded as it is with huge mountains, and ponderous rocks, at such a prodigious degree of rapidity! It surpasses human conception!—How natural, how pertinent, how almost necessary, after such an observation, is the acknowledgment made by holy *Jeb*, *I know that THOU canst do every thing; and that no thought, no imaginable scheme, can be withholden from thee, can lie beyond thy power to execute. Ch. xlii. 2.*

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an amazing instance of infinite might is this ! —Can any thing be impossible to the LORD, the LORD GOD ; the Creator and Controller of all the ends of the earth, all the regions of the universe ? Rather, is not all that we count *difficult* perfect ease to that glorious Being, who only spake, and the world was made* ? who only gave command, and the stupendous axle was lodged fast, the lofty wheels moved complete ? —What a sure defence, O my soul, is this everlasting strength of thy GOD ! be this thy continual *refuge*, in the article of danger ; this thy never-failing *resource*, in every time of need.

What cannot this uncontrollable power of the great JEHOVAH effect for his people ? —Be their miseries ever so galling, cannot this GOD relieve them ? Be their wants ever so numerous, cannot this GOD supply them ? Be their corruptions within ever so inveterate, or their temptations without ever so importunate ; cannot this mighty, mighty GOD subdue the former, and fortify them against the latter ? —Should *Trials*, with an incessant vehemence, sift thee as wheat, should *Tribulation*, with a weight of woes, almost grind thee to powder ; should *Pleasure*, with her bewitching smiles, solicit thee to delicious ruin ; yet “ hold thee fast by GOD,” and lay thy help upon him that is omnipotent †.

* *Psal.* xxxiii. 9.

† It is a most charming description, as well as a most comfortable promise, which we find in *Isa.* xl. 29, 30, 31. — *He giveth power to the feeble ; and to them that have no might*

Thou canst not be involved in such calamitous circumstances, or exposed to such imminent

at all, *HE* not only imparteth, but *increaseth strength*; making it to abound, where it did not so much as exist.—Without this aid of *JEHOVAH*, even the youths, amidst the very prime of their vigour and activity, shall become languid in their work, and weary in their course. And the young men, to whose resolution and abilities nothing seemed impracticable, shall not only not succeed, but utterly fail, and miscarry in their various enterprises.—Whereas they that wait upon the *LORD*, and confide in his grace, shall press on, with a generous ardour, from one degree of religious improvement to another. Instead of exhausting, they shall renew their strength; difficulties shall animate, and toil invigorate them. They shall mount up as with soaring wings, above all opposition; they shall be carried through every discouragement, as eagles cleave the yielding air. They shall run, with speed and alacrity, the way of *GOD's* commandments, and not be weary; they shall hold on (*רכל* *progre dientur carent iter*) with constancy and perseverance, in those peaceful paths, and not faint; but arrive at the end of their progress, and receive the prize of their high calling.

To this most cheering doctrine, permit me to add its no less beautiful and delightful contrast. *Eliphaz*, speaking of the enemies of the righteous, says—לא נכחר קימנו.—Which is rendered by a great critic in sacred learning, *Nihil existum factio nobis adversaria*.—We should reckon our language acquitted itself tolerably well, if, when depreciating the abilities of an adversary, it should represent them weak as the scorched thread, feeble as the dissolving smoke. But these are cold forms of speech, compared with the eloquence of the East. According to the genius of our Bible, all the power that opposes the godly is a mere nothing; or, to speak with a more emphatical air of contempt, a destroyed, an extirpated nothing.—Admire this expression, ye that are charmed with daring images, and (what *Tully* calls *verbum ardens*) a spirited and glowing diction.—Remember this declaration, ye that fight the good fight of faith. The united force of all your enemies, be it ever so formidable to the eye of flesh, is before your almighty Guardian, *nihil nihilissimum*, not only nothing, but less than nothing, and vanity. *Job* xxii. 20.

peril; but thy God, whom thou serveſt, is able to deliver thee from the one, and to ſupport thee under the other. To *ſupport!* to *deliver!* Let me not diſhonour the unlimited greatneſs of his power. He is able to exalt thee, from the deepeſt diſtreſs, to the moſt triumphant joy; and to make even a complication of evils work together for thy everlaſting good. *He is able* not only to accompliſh what I have been ſpeaking, but *to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can aſk or think* *.

O! the *wretched condition* of the wicked, who have this Lord of all power for their enemy! O! the *deſperate madneſs* of the ungodly, who provoke the Almighty to jealouſy!—Beſotted creatures! are you able to contend with your Maker, and enter the liſts againſt incenſed Omnipotence? Can you *bear* the fierceneſs of his wrath, or ſuſtain the vengeance of his liſted arm? At his preſence, though awfully ſerene, “the

* I ſhould, in this place, avoid ſwelling the notes any farther, was it not to take notice of the inimitable paſſage quoted above, and to be found, *Eccl. iii. 10.*—Which, if I do not greatly miſtake, is the moſt complete representation of Divine power, that it is poſſible for words to frame.—To do all that our tongue can *aſk*, is a miracle of might. But we often think more than we can expreſs, and are actuated with “*groanings unutterable.*” Yet to answer theſe vaſt deſires, is not beyond the accompliſhment of our heavenly Father—Nay, to make his gifts and his bleſſings commensurate to the *largeſt ſtretch* of human expectations, is a ſmall thing with the God of glory. He is able to do *above all* that the moſt enlarged apprehenſions can imagine; yea, to do abundantly more, *exceeding abundantly more*, than the mind itſelf, in the utmoſt exertion of all its faculties, is capable of *wiſhing*, or knows how to *conceive*.

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“ hills melt like wax, and the mountains skip, “ like frightened lambs.” At the least intimation of his displeasure, the foundations of nature rock, and “ the pillars of heaven tremble.” How then can a withered leaf endure, when “ his “ lips are full of indignation, and his tongue “ as a devouring fire ?”—Or can any thing screen a guilty worm, when the great and terrible God shall *whet his glittering sword*, and *his hand take hold on inexorable judgment* ? when *that hand*, which shoots the planets, masses of excessive bulk *, with such surprising rapidity, through the sky : *that hand*, which darts the comets to such unmeasurable distances, beyond the orbit of our remotest planet, beyond the pursuit of the strongest eye : when *THAT HAND* is stretched out to punish, can the munition of rocks, the intervention of seas, or even interposing worlds, divert the blow ?—Consider this *Ambition* ; and bow thy haughty crest. Consider this, *Disobedience* ; and bend thy iron sinew. O ! consider this, all ye that forget, or affront, the tremendous JEHOVAH. He can, by a single act of his will, lay the universe in utter ruin ; and can he want power to bring

*One of the planets (*Saturn*), is supposed to be more than 90 times as big as the globe on which we live. According to the same calculation, the largest of the planets (*Jupiter*) is above 200 times vaster than this vast collection of spacious forests, towering mountains, extensive continents, and boundless oceans.—Such enormous magnitude ! winged with such prodigious speed !—It raises astonishment beyond expression.—*With GOD is terrible majesty !* Job xxxvii 22.—*Who shall not fear THEE, O LORD, and glorify thy name ?* Rev. xv. 4.

you, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to the dust of death, or to the flames of hell? He has—I say not, ten thousand lightnings to scorch you to ashes; ten thousand thunders to crush you into atoms; but, what is unspeakably more dreadful,—he has an *army* of terrors, even in the *look* of his angry countenance. His very frown is worse than destruction.

I cannot dismiss this subject, without admiring the *patience* of the blessed God; who, though so strong and powerful, yet “is provoked every day.”—Surely, as is his majesty, so is his mercy; his pity altogether commensurate to his power. If I vilify but the name of an earthly monarch, I lose my liberty, and am confined to the dungeon. If I appear in arms, and draw the sword, against my national sovereign; my life is forfeited, and my very blood will scarce atone for the crime. But Thee I have dishonoured, O! thou King immortal and invisible! Against thee my breast has fomented *secret disaffection*; my behaviour has risen up in *open rebellion*; and yet I am spared, yet I am preserved. Instead of being banished from thy presence, I sit at thy table, and am fed from thy hand. Instead of pursuing me with *thunderbolts* of vengeance, thy *favours* surround me on every side. That arm, that injured arm, which might justly fall, with irretrievable ruin, on a traitor’s head, is most graciously stretched out, to caress him with the tenderest endearments, to cherish him with every instance of parental kindness! —O! thou mightiest, thou best of beings, how

am I pained at my very soul, for such shameful and odious disingenuity ! Let me always abominate myself, as the basest of creatures ; but *adore* that unwearied long-suffering of thine, which refuses to be irritated ; *love* that unre-mitted goodness, which no acts of ingratitude could stop, or so much as check, in its gracious current. O ! let this stubborn heart, which duty could not bind, which threatenings could not awe, be the captive, the *willing captive*, of such triumphant beneficence.

I HAVE often been struck with wonder at that almighty skill, which *weighed* the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance ; which *proportioned* the waters in the hollow of his hand, and *adjusted* the dust of the earth * by a mea-

† Isa. xl. 12. *The dust of the earth*, in this sublime Scripture, signifies the dry land, or *solida* part of our globe ; which is placed in contradistinction to the whole collection of *fluid* matter, mentioned in the preceding clause.—Perhaps this remarkable expression may be intended to intimate, not only the extreme niceness, which stated the dimensions of the world in *general*, or in the gross ; but also that *particular exactness*, with which the very smallest materials that constitute its frame, not (excepting each individual atom), were calculated and disposed —*q. d.* 'Tis a small thing to say, No such enormous redundances, as unnecessary ridges of mountains, were suffered to subsist. There was not so much as the least grain of sand *superfluous*, or a single particle of dust *deficient*.—As the grand aim of the description is, to celebrate the *consummate wisdom*, exemplified in the creation ; and to display that *perfect proportion*, with which every part tallies, coincides, and harmonizes with the whole ; I have taken leave to alter the word of our *English* translation *comprehend*, and introduce in its stead a term, equally faithful to the *Hebrew*, and more significative for the prophet's precise idea.

sure. But how much more marvellous is that magnificent œconomy which *poised* the stars with inexpressible nicety, and *meted* out the heavens with a span! where all is prodigiously vast; immensely various; and yet more than mathematically exact. Surely the *wisdom* of God manifests itself in the skies, and shines in those lucid orbs; shines on the contemplative mind, with a lustre incomparably brighter than that which their united splendours transmit to the eye.

Behold yonder countless multitude of globes; consider their amazing magnitude; regard them as the sovereigns of so many systems, each accompanied with his planetary equipage. Upon this supposition, what a multiplicity of mighty spheres must be perpetually running their rounds in the upper regions! Yet none mistake their way, or *wander* from the goal, though they pass through trackless and unbounded fields. None *fly off* from their orbits into extravagant excursions; none *press in* upon their centre with too near an approach. None *interfere* with each other in their perennial passage, or *intercept* the kindly communications of another's influence*. But all their rotations proceed in eternal harmony; keeping such time, and observing such laws, as are most exquisitely adapted to the perfection of the whole.

* The interception of light, by means of an eclipse, happens *very rarely*. And then it is of so *short* a continuance, as not to be at all inconvenient. Nay, it is attended with such *circumstances*, as render it rather useful than prejudicial.

WHILE I contemplate this “excellent wisdom, which made the heavens,” and attunes all their motions; how am I abashed at that mixture of arrogance and folly, which has, at any time, inclined me to murmur at thy *dispensations*, O LORD! What is this, but a sort of implicit treason against thy supremacy, and a tacit denial of thy infinite understanding? Hast thou so regularly placed such a wonderful diversity of systems through the spaces of the universe?—didst thou, without any probationary essays, without any improving retouches, speak them into the most consummate perfection?—dost thou continually superintend all their circumstances, with a sagacity that never mistakes the minutest title of propriety? And shall I be so unaccountably stupid, as to question the *justness* of thy *discernment*, in “chusing my inheritance, and fixing the bounds of my habitation!”—Not a single *erratum*, in modelling the structure, determining the distance *, and conducting the career of *unnumbered* worlds! And shall my peevish humour presume to censure thy interposition, with re-

* The sun in particular, (and let this serve as a specimen of that most curious exactness with which the other celestial bodies are constituted, and all their circumstances regulated), the sun is formed of such a determinate magnitude, and placed at such a convenient distance,—“as not to annoy, but only refresh us, and nourish the ground with its kindly warmth. If it was *larger*, it would set the earth on fire; if *smaller*, it would leave it frozen. If it was *nearer* us, we should be scorched to death; if *farther* from us, we should not be able to live for want of heat.”

STACKHOUSE'S *History of the Bible*.

gard to the affairs of *one* inconsiderable creature ; whose stature, in such a comparative view, is less than a span, and his present duration little more than a moment ?

O ! THOU GOD, “ in whose hand my breath “ is, and whose are all my ways,” let such sentiments as now possess my thoughts be always lively on my heart ! These shall compose my mind into a *cheerful* acquiescence, and a *thankful* submission ; even when afflictions gall the sense, or disappointments break my schemes. Then shall I, like the grateful patriarch *, in all the changes of my condition, and even in the depths of distress, erect an *altar* of adoring resignation, and inscribe it with the Apostle’s *motto*, TO GOD ONLY WISE. Then, shouldst thou give me leave to be the carver of my own fortunes ; I would humbly desire to relinquish the grant, and recommit the disposal of myself to thy unerring beneficence. Fully persuaded that *thy counsels*, though contrary to my froward inclinations, or even afflictive to my flesh, are incomparably more eligible than the blind impulse of my own will, however soothing to animal nature.

ON a careless inspection, you perceive no accuracy or uniformity in the position of the heavenly bodies. They appear like an *illustrious chaos* ; a promiscuous heap of shining globes ; neither ranked in order, nor moving by line. But what *seems* confusion, is all regularity.—What carries a show of negligence, is really

* See *Gen.* xii. 7, 8.

the result of the most masterly contrivance. You think, perhaps, they rove in their aerial flight ; but they rove by the nicest rule, and without the least error. Their circuits, though seemingly devious ; their mazes, though intricate to our apprehensions * ; are marked out, not indeed with golden compasses, but by the infinitely more exact determinations of the all-wise Spirit.

- So, what wears the *appearance* of calamity, in the allotments appointed for the godly, has really the *nature* of a blessing. It issues from fatherly love, and will terminate in the richest good. If *Joseph* is snatched from the embraces of an indulgent parent, and abandoned to slavery in a foreign land ; it is in order to save the holy family from perishing by famine ; and to preserve “ the seed, in whom all the nations of “ the earth should be blessed.” If he falls into the deepest disgrace, it is on purpose that he may rise to the highest honours. Even the confinement of the prison, by the unsearchable workings of Providence, opens his way to the right hand of the throne itself.—Let the most afflicted servant of JESUS wait the final upshot of things. He will *then* discover the apparent expediency of all those tribulations, which *now*, perhaps, he can hardly admit without reluctance, or suffer without some struggles of dissatisfaction. Then the gushing tear, and the

• ———— Mazes intricate,
Eccentric, intervold ; yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem. MILT.

heaving sigh, will be turned into tides of gratitude, and hymns of holy wonder.

In the mean time, let no audacious railer presumptuously impeach the Divine procedure; but, adoring where we cannot comprehend, let us expect the *evolution* of the mysterious plan. Then shall every eye perceive, that the seeming labyrinths of Providence were the most *direct* and *compendious* way to effect his general purposes of grace, and to bring about each one's particular happiness*.—Then, also, shall it be clearly shewn, in the presence of applauding worlds, why Virtue pined in want, while Vice rioted in affluence; why amiable Innocence so often dragged the dungeon *chain*, while horrid Guilt trailed the *robe* of state.—That day of universal audit, that day of everlasting retribution, will not only *vindicate*, but *magnify*, the whole management of Heaven. The august sessions shall close with this unanimous, this glorious acknowledgment: “Though *clouds* “and *darkness*, impenetrable by any human “scrutiny, were sometimes round about the supreme Conductor of things; yet *righteousness* “and *judgment* were the constant *habitation* of “his seat †; the invariable standard of all his “administrations.”—Thus (if I may illustrate the grandest truths by inferior occurrences)

* ——— The moral world,

Which, though to us it seems embroiled, moves on

In higher order; fitted, and impell'd

By *Wisdom's* finest hand, and issuing all

In gen'ral good.

THOMS. Winter, line 586.

† *Psal.* xcvi. 2.

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while we view the arras on the side of *least distinction*, it is void of any elegant fancy; without any nice strokes of art; nothing but a confused jumble of incoherent threads. No sooner is the piece beheld in its *proper aspect*, but the suspected rudeness vanishes, and the most curious arrangement takes place. We are charmed with designs of the finest taste, and figures of the most graceful form. All is shaped with symmetry; all is clad in beauty.

THE *goodness* of GOD is most eminently displayed in the skies.—Could we take an understanding survey of whatever is formed by the divine Architect, throughout the whole extent of *material* things; our minds would be transported with their excellencies, and our tongues echo back that great encomium, “They are “good, very good*.” Most *beautiful* in themselves†; contrived by unerring wisdom, and executed with inimitable skill. Most *useful* in their functions†; exactly fitting the places they fill, and completely answering the purposes for

* Gen. i. 31.

†† This καλοκαγαθία of the universe, and all its parts, has been very highly, and very justly, extolled, by the ancient inquirers into Nature; and was, indeed, an illustrious scene spread before the Sages of the Heathen world, wherein to contemplate the goodness and the glories of the Supreme Being.—It was nobly said, by a Pagan philosopher, on this occasion; Εἰς ἑρῶτα μεταβληθῆναι τὸν Θεὸν μίλλοισι δημιουργεῖν. That GOD, when he undertook the work of creation, transformed himself into Love.—But he need not transform himself into this amiable principle; for “God is love;” as was much more nobly said by one, whom that philosopher would have termed a barbarian. 1 John iv. 8.

which they were intended.—All the parts of the inanimate creation proclaim, both by their intrinsic and relative excellencies, the all-diffusive beneficence of their Maker.

How much more wonderful are the displays of Divine indulgence, in the worlds of life ! Because dead matter is incapable of delight, therefore the gracious Creator has raised innumerable ranks of *perceptive existence* ; such as are qualified to taste his bounty, and enjoy each a happiness suited to its peculiar state. With this view, he furnished the regions of inferior nature with an order and a series of sensitive beings. The *waters* teem with shoals of finny inhabitants. The *dry land* swarms with animals of every order. The dwellings of the *firmament* are occupied by multitudes of winged people. Not so much as a *green leaf*, philosophers say, but lodges and accommodates its puny animalcule tenants*. — And wherefore this

* A very celebrated poet, in a beautiful paragraph on this subject, informs his readers, that all nature swarms with life. In subterranean *cells* the earth heaves with vital motion. Even the hard *stone*, in the very inmost recesses of its impenetrable citadel, holds multitudes of animated inhabitants. The *pulp* of mellow fruit, and all the productions of the orchard, feed the invisible nations. Each *liquid*, whether of acid taste, or milder relish, abounds with various forms of sensitive existence. Nor is the pure *stream*, or transparent *air*, without their colonies of unseen people — In which constitution of things, we have a wonderful instance, not only of the Divine goodness to those minute beings, in giving them a *capacity* for animal gratifications ; but of his tender care for mankind, in making them *imperceptible* to our senses.

diversity, this profusion of living creatures. flying the air, treading the ground, and gliding through the paths of the sea? For this most glorious reason:—That the eternal Sovereign may exercise his superabundant goodness; that his *table* may be furnished with millions and millions of *guests*; that he may fill, every hour, every moment, their mouths with food, or their hearts with gladness.

But what a small theatre are three or four *elements* for the operations of JEHOVAH's bounty! His magnificent liberality scorns such scanty limits. If you ask, Wherefore has he created *all worlds*, and replenished them with an unknown multiplicity of beings, rising, one above another, in an endless gradation of still richer endowments, and still nobler capacities? The answer is,—For the manifestation of his own glory, and especially for the *communication* of his inexhaustible beneficence*.—The great Crea-

———“ These conceal'd

“ By the kind art of forming Heav'n, escape

“ The grosser eye of man: for if the worlds

“ In worlds inclos'd should on his senses burst;

“ From cates ambrosial, and the nectar'd bowl,

“ He'd turn abhorrent; and, in dead of night,

“ When silence sleeps o'er all, be stunn'd with noise.”

THOMAS. SUMMER.

* A sacred writer, considering this delightful subject, and confining his observation within the *narrow limits* of his own country, cries out, with a mixture of amazement and gratitude, *How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!*—Who then can forbear being lost in wonder, and transported with delight, when he extends his survey to those infinitely more *copious communications* of Divine bounty; which, like salutary and refreshing streams, run through all worlds; and make, not only the *little vallies* of a single kingdom, but the immensity of creation, *laugh and sing?* Zech. ix. 17.

tor could propose no advantage to himself. His bliss is incapable of any addition. "Before
 "the mountains were brought forth, or ever
 "the earth and the world were made," he was
 supremely happy in his own independent and
 all-sufficient self. His grand design, therefore, in
 erecting so many stately fabrics, and peopling
 them with so many tribes of inhabitants, was,
 to *transfuse* his exuberant kindness, and *impart*
 felicity in all its forms. Ten thousand worlds,
 stocked with ten thousand times ten thousand
 ranks of sensitive and intelligent existence, are
 so many spacious gardens, which, with rivers
 of communicated joy, this ever-flowing foun-
 tain waters continually.

Boundless †, and (which raises our idea of
 this divine principle to the very highest degree
 of perfection) disinterested munificence †! How
 inexpressibly amiable is the blessed God, con-
 sidered in this charming light! Is it possible to
 conceive any excellence so adorable and lovely
 as infinite benevolence, guided by unerring wil-
 dom, and exerting almighty power, on purpose
 to make a whole universe happy?—O my soul,
 what an *irresistible attractive* is here! What a
 most worthy object, for thy most fervent affec-
 tion! Shall now every glittering toy become a
 rival to this transcendently-beneficent Being, and

†† In this sense, *there is none good, but One, that is GOD.*
 None universally and essentially good: none, whose good-
 ness extends itself, in an infinite *variety* of blessings, to *every*
 capable object; or who always dispenses his favours, from
 the *sole* principle of *free* and disinterested benevolence.

rob him of thy heart?—No. Let his all-creating arm teach thee to trust in the fulness of his sufficiency:—let his all-superintending eye incline thee to acquiesce in the dispensations of his Providence:—and let his bounty, so freely vouchsafed, so amply diffused, induce thee to *love* him, with all the ardour of a grateful and admiring soul; induce thee to *serve* him, not with a joyless awe, or slavish dread, but with unfeigned alacrity, and a delightful complacency.

If the goodness of GOD is so admirably seen in the works of Nature, and the favours of Providence; with what a noble superiority does it *even triumph* in the *mystery of redemption**! Redemption is the brightest mirror, in which to contemplate this most lovely attribute of the Deity. Other gifts are only as *mites* from the divine treasury; but redemption opens, I had almost said exhausts, all the *stores* of indulgence

* In this, and in other parts of the *Contemplations*, the reader will observe, that the attributes of the DEITY are represented as shining with more distinguished lustre in the wonders of *redemption*, than in the works of *creation*. If such remarks should seem to be unprecedented, or to stand in need of a vindication; permit me to subjoin the sentiments of a great critic, equally versed in *both* those sublime theories.—“In a perfect orator,” he says, “Tully requires some skill in the nature of heavenly bodies; because his mind will be more extensive and unconfined; and, when he descends to treat of human affairs, he will both think and write in a more exalted and magnificent manner. For the same reason, that excellent master would have recommended the study of those great and glorious mysteries, which revelation has discovered to us; to which the noblest parts of this system of the world are as much inferior, as the creature is less excellent than the Creator.”

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and grace. Herein "God commendeth his love*;" not only manifests, but sets it off, as it were, with every bright and grand embellishment: manifests it in so stupendous a manner, that it is beyond parallel; beyond thought: "above all blessing and praise."—Was he not thy Son, everlasting God, thy *only* Son; the Son of thy bosom from eternal ages; the highest object of thy complacential delight? Was not thy love to this adorable Son incomparably greater than the tenderest affection of *any*, or the united affections of *all*, mortal parents? Was not the blessed JESUS more illustrious in excellency than all angels; more exalted in dignity than all heavens? Yet didst thou resign HIM for poor mortals; for vile sinners!—Couldst thou see him descend from his royal *throne*; and take up his abode in the sordid *stable*? see him forego the *homage* of the seraphim; and stand exposed to the reproachful *indignities* of an insolent rabble? see him arraigned at the bar, and sentenced to death; numbered with malefactors, and nailed to the gibbet; bathed in his own innocent blood, and pouring out his soul in agonies of sorrow?—Could the Father, the Father *himself*, with unknown philanthropy †, say, "It shall, it shall be so! My pity to rebellious man pleads, and prevails. Awake, therefore, O sword ‡, edged with divine wrath; awake; and be sheathed in that *immaculate* breast; pierce that *dearly-beloved* heart. I am content that my Son

* Rom. v. 8.

† Philanthropy, that is, loving-kindness to man.

‡ Zech. xiii. 7.

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“endure the sharpness of death, rather than
 “sinful mortals perish for ever.”—Incompre-
 hensible love ! May it henceforward be the fa-
 vourite subject of my *meditation*; more delight-
 ful to my musing mind than applause to the
 ambitious ear ! May it be the darling theme of
 my *discourse* ; sweeter to my tongue than the
 droppings of the honey-comb to my taste ! May
 it be my choicest *comfort*, through all the changes
 of life ; and my reviving *cordial*, even in the last
 extremities of dissolution itself !

A *prophet*, contemplating, with a distant sur-
 vey, this unexampled instance of almighty love,
 is wrapt into a *transport of devotion*. At a loss
 for proper acknowledgments, he calls upon the
 whole universe to aid his labouring breast, and
 supply his lack of praise. *Sing melodiously, ye*
vaulted heavens ; exult and even leap for glad-
ness, thou cumberous earth ; ye mountains, break
your long silence, and burst into peals of loudest
acclamation * ; *for the LORD*, by this precious

* *Isa. xlix. 13.*—I have not adhered to our common trans-
 lation, but endeavoured to preserve, somewhat more faith-
 fully, the noble *pathos*, and inimitable *energy*, of the sacred
 original.—The love of GOD manifested in a divine and dy-
 ing Saviour, is a blessing of such inconceivable richness, as
 must render all acknowledgments *flat*, and all encomiums
languid. Yet, I think, the most poetical and most empha-
 tical celebration of that unspeakable instance of goodness,
 is contained in this rapturous exclamation of the prophet.
 Which intimates, with a wonderful majesty of sentiment,
 that even the whole compass of the *inanimate creation*, could
 it be sensible of the benefit, and capable of delight, would
 express its *gratitude*, in all these demonstrations of the most
 lively and exuberant joy.

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gift, and this great salvation, *hath comforted his people*.—A *sacred historian* hath left it upon record, that, at the first exhibition of this ravishing scene, there was with the angel who brought the blessed tidings a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and making the concave of the skies resound with their Hallelujahs. At the dawn of the Sun of Righteousness, when he was beginning to rise with healing in his wings, the *morning-stars* sang together, and all the *sons of GOD* shouted for joy.—And shall *man*, whom this gracious dispensation principally respects; shall *man*, who is the centre of all these gladdening rays; shall he have no heart to adore, no anthem to celebrate, this

Love without end, and without measure grace? MILT.

How *pure* is the state of the sky, and how *clear* its aspect! Clearer than the limpid stream; purer than the transparent crystal; and more curiously fine than the polished mirror. That *stately ceiling*, fretted with gold, and stretched to an extent of many millions of leagues, is not disfigured with a single flaw. That *azure canopy*, embroidered with stars, and spacious enough to form a covering for unnumbered worlds, is without the least spot or wrinkle.—Yet this, even this, will scarce yield us so much as a faint representation of the *divine purity*. GOD is a GOD of matchless and transcendent excellency. His ways are uprightness itself. His counsels and words are the very sanctity of wisdom and of truth. The *laws* which he has given to universal Nature are exquisitely contrived, and be-

yond all possibility of improvement. The *precepts* which he has appointed for the human race are a complete summary of all that is honourable in itself, and perfective of the rational mind.—Not the least *oversight*, in planning a series of events for all futurity. Not the least mal-administration, in managing the affairs of every age, since time began; and of every nation under the whole heavens.—Pardon these disparaging expressions. A *negative* perfection is far, far beneath thy dignity, *O thou Most Highest* *. In all these instances; in all thy acts,

* *O thou Most Highest*.—This expression occurs more than once in the Psalms used by the established Church. It is, I think, one of those *beauties*, which, because often exhibited, generally escape our notice. It is a *superlative* formed on a superlative; and though not strictly conformable to grammatical rules, is nobly superior to them all.—The language seems to be sensible of its own deficiency, when the incomprehensible *JEHOVAH* is addressed, or celebrated. Oppressed, as it were, with the glories of the subject, it labours after a *more emphatical* manner of diction than the ordinary forms of speech afford.—It is, if I rightly judge, one of these daring and happy peculiarities of a masterly genius, which Mr. *Pope* so finely describes; and, while he describes, exemplifies :

“ Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
 “ And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
 “ From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
 “ And snatch a grace beyond the reach of Art.”

Essay on Criticism.

St. *Paul's*—*ἡλαχιστοῖσιν πάντων τῶν ἁγίων*.—Is a beautiful passage of the like nature. Which our translators have very properly rendered, *less than the least of all saints*.—His *πολλῶν μαλλόν κρισσοῦν* is another instance of the same kind. But here the *English* version fails. *Far better* is extremely flaccid, compared with the *nervous* original. And I greatly question, whether it is possible to translate the sentence, with equal conciseness, and with equal spirit. See *Eph.* iii. 8. *Phil.* i. 23.

and all thy attributes, thou art not only holy, but "*glorious in holiness.*"

So inconceivably holy is the LORD GOD of hosts, that he sees *defilement* even in the *brightness* of the firmament. The living sapphire of the heavens, before his majesty, loses its lustre. Yea, *the stars*, (though the most pure and resplendent part of the heavens) *are not pure in his sight.* How much less man, who, in his fallen and depraved state, is but as a worm, that crawls in the corrupted carcase: and the son of man, who, by reason of his manifold actual impurities, is too justly compared to an insect, that wallows, amidst stench and putrefaction *?—Is there not

* *Job xxv. 5, 6.* I submit it to the judgment of the learned, whether this is not the true meaning of the text.—It may not, perhaps, recommend itself to the *squeamishly-nice* critic; or to those persons who dream of, I know not what, *dignity* in our fallen nature. But it seems, in preference to every other interpretation, *suitable* to the sacred context; and is far, far from being *injurious* to the character of that apostate race, which is "altogether become abominable," and "is as an unclean thing."—On this supposition, there is not only an apparent, but a very striking contrast, between the purity of GOD, and the pollution of man: the *purity* of the Most High GOD, which outshines the moon, and eclipses the stars; the *pollution* of degenerate man, which, exclusive of a Saviour, would render him as loathsome to the all-seeing Eye, as the vilest vermine are in ours.—Without assigning this sense to the passage, I cannot discern the force of the *antithesis*, nor indeed the *propriety* of the sentiment. Worms, in the general, give us an idea of *meaness* and *infirmity*, not of *defilement* and *impurity*; unless they are insects, hatched amidst putrefaction, and considered in such noisome circumstances.—The two words of the original, דומה and תולעה are evidently used in this signification, by *Moses* and *Isaiah*; by the former to denote the vermine

then abundant cause, for the most irreproachable and eminent of mankind, to renounce all arrogant pretensions; to lay aside every assuming air; to take nothing but *shame* and confusion to themselves? A holy prophet, and a holy prince, felt such humbling impressions, from a glimpse of the uncreated purity. *I abhor myself in dust and ashes**, was the declaration of the one; *I am a man of unclean lips*†, the confession of the other.—Should not this teach us all to adore the divine mercies, for that precious *purifying fountain*‡, which was foretold from the foundation of the world, but was opened at that awful juncture, when knotty whips tore the flesh; when ragged thorns mangled the temples; when sharpened nails cut fresh sluices for the crimson current; when the gash of the spear completed the dreadful work, and *forthwith flowed there*, from the wounded heart, *blood and water*?

Especially, since GOD himself saw no blemish in his dear Son. *He looketh to the moon, and it shineth not*; yet his all-penetrating and jealous eye discerned nothing amiss, nothing defective, in our glorious Redeemer. Nothing amiss! He bore this most illustrious testimony concerning his holy child JESUS: “In him I am pleased;

which devoured the *putrefied* manna; by the latter, to express the reptiles which swarm in the body that fees corruption. *Exod. xvi. 20. Isa. xiv. 11.*

* *Job xlii. 6.*

† *Isa. vi. 5.*

‡ *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. Zech. xiii. 1.*

"I am *well pleased*; I acquiesce, with entire complacency, and with the highest delight, in his person; his undertaking; and the whole execution of his office."—How should this thought enliven our hopes, while the other mortifies our pride? Should not our hearts spring within us, and even leap for joy, at the repeated assurance given us by revelation, that such a divinely-excellent person is our Mediator? What apparent reason has every believer to adopt the blessed Virgin's exclamation! "*My soul doth magnify the LORD*, for his transcendent mercy; and *my spirit rejoices*, not in wide-extended harvests, waving over my fertile glebe*; not in armies vanquished, and leaving the peculiar treasure of nations* for my spoil; but in an infinitely richer, nobler blessing, even in *GOD my Saviour*."—That a person so sublime and perfect, has vouchsafed to become my *Surety*; to give himself for my *Ransom*, in the world below; and act as my *Advocate*, in the royal presence above; yea, to make my recovery the reward of his sufferings; my final felicity the honour of his mediatorial kingdom!

WHEN an innumerable multitude† of bodies, many of them more than a *hundred thousand*

* The inspired penman, from these two occasions of distinguished joy, sets forth the incomparably *greater delight* which arises from the gift of a Saviour, and the blessing of redemption. *Isa. ix. ver. 3.* compared with *ver. 6.*

† This refers, not only to the planets which pass and repass about our sun, but also to the other planetary worlds, which are supposed to attend the several fixed stars.

miles in diameter *, are all set in motion;—when the orbits in which they perform their periodical revolutions, are extended at the rate of several hundreds of *millions*;—when each has a *distinct* and separate sphere for finishing his vast circuit;—when no one knows what it is to be cramped, but each most *freely expands* in his unbounded career;—when every one is placed at such an *immense remove* from each other, that they appear to their respective inhabitants only as so many spots of light;—how astonishing must be the expanse, which yields *room* for all those mighty globes, and their widely-diffused operations! To what prodigious lengths did the almighty Builder stretch his line, when he marked out the stupendous platform!—I wonder at such an immeasurable extent. My very thoughts are lost in this abyss of space. But be it known to mortals, be it never forgot by sinners, that, in all its most surprising amplitude, it is *small*, it is *scanty*, compared with the bounty and the mercy of its Maker.

His *bounty* † is absolutely without limits, and without end. The most lavish generosity can-

* The diameter of *Jupiter* is calculated at 130,650 miles, while its orbit is reckoned to consist of 895,134,000. Which computation, according to the maxims of astronomy, and the laws of proportion, may, as is taken for granted in the *Contemplations*, be applied to *other planets* revolving round, *other suns*.

† By *bounty*, I mean, not the actual exercise, or the sensible effects, of this excellency in the Deity. These *are*, and always *must be*, through the immense perfections of the attribute, and the necessary scantiness of the recipient,

not exhaust, or even diminish, his munificence. O! all ye tribes of men, or rather, all ye classes of intelligent creatures, ye are not straitened in the *liberality* of your ever-blessed Creator: be not straitened in your own *expectations*. "Open your mouth wide, and he shall fill it," with copious and continual draughts from the cup of joy. Your GOD, on whom is your whole dependence, is more than able, is more than willing, to "supply all your need, according to his riches in glory."—When the LORD JEHOVAH is the giver, and his grace * the gift; let your wishes be unbounded, and your craving unsatiable. All that created beings can possibly *covet*, is but a very small pittance of that unknown happiness, which the everlasting Benefactor is ready to *bestow*. Suppose every charitable disposition which warms the hearts of the human race, added to those more enlarged affections which glow in heavenly bosoms;

bounded. But I would be understood, as speaking of the Divine *power*, and the Divine *will*, to exert Divine beneficence. These can have no real, no imaginable limits. These, after a profusion of blessings, distributed to unnumbered worlds, continued through unnumbered ages, must *still* have more to bestow; for *ever* have more to bestow; *infinitely* more to bestow, than it is possible for creation itself to receive.

* 1 Cor. ix. 8. GOD is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.—How beautiful and emphatical is this description! inferior to nothing, but that extent of ability, and those riches of liberality, which it so eloquently celebrates. Does it not *exhaust* all the powers of language, while it attempts to give us a *specimen* of the munificence of the LORD?

what were they all, even in their highest exercise, compared with the benignity of the divine Nature!—Bless *me* then, thou eternal Source of love; bless *all* that reverence thy holy name; according to thy own most profuse goodness, whose great prerogative it is to disdain all measure. O! bless us, in proportion to that grace; the richness of which (unutterable by the tongues of men, and of angels) was once *spoken* in the groans, and *written* in the wounds, of thy expiring Son!

Spacious indeed are these heavens! Where do they begin? Where do they end? What is their extent? Can angels answer my question? Have angels travelled the vast circuit? can angels measure the bounds of space! No; 'tis boundless, 'tis unknown, 'tis amazing all.—How charming then to reflect, that the *mercy* of GOD is “greater than the heavens;” is more extensive than the dimensions of the sky! Transporting reflection! Let me indulge thee once more*. Let me think over the delightful displays of this lovely attribute; and, while I ad-

* *Once more* refers to page 153d of *Reflections on a Flower-Garden*.—The following pages, to the 214th, exhibit a *digressive* view of the Divine mercy. I thought it proper to apprise my reader of this excursion; though I hope, it will be needless to offer an apology for enlarging upon a theme incomparably joyous. Who can complain of *tediousness*, while I speak consolation to distressed, and recovery to ruined, creatures? The Divine mercy is the sole fountain of all our present and future blessings. In conformity to this benign attribute, human hopes arise, and human felicity flows. Who, therefore, can be weary of *viewing* and *reviewing*, when the lengths and breadths of forgiving grace are the ravishing prospect?

mire the *trophies* of forgiving goodness, add one to the number.—With what amiable and affecting colours is this represented in the *parable* of the *prodigal*! What could induce that foolish youth to forsake his father's house? Had he not been tenderly cherished by the good parent, and loaded with benefits from his indulgent hand? Were not the restraints of parental government an easy yoke? or rather, a *preservative* from ruin? Notwithstanding every endearing obligation, he revolts from his duty; and launches into such scandalous irregularities as were dishonourable to his family, and destructive to himself.—When necessity, not choice, but sharp necessity, drove him to a submissive return; does the injured father stand aloof, or shut his door? Quite the reverse. He espies him, while he is yet a *great way off*; and the moment he beholds the profligate youth he *has compassion on him*. His bowels yearn; they “sound like an harp,” touched with notes divinely soft. He never once thinks of his ungracious departure, and infamous debaucheries. Pity, parental pity, passes an act of oblivion; and, in one instant, cancels a series of long-continued provocations.—So strong are the workings of fatherly affection, that he is almost impatient to embrace the naked and destitute wretch. The son's pace is slow; *He arose, and came*; the father's is swift; He sprung forth, (aged as he was) and *ran*. And is there a single frown in his brow, or one upbraiding word on his tongue?—Instead of loathing the sordid

creature, or reproaching him for his odious excesses; he *falls* on his *neck*, clasps him in his arms, and hugs him to his bosom. Instead of disowning the riotous spendthrift, or rejecting him for his undutiful behaviour; he receives and welcomes him with *kisses* of delight. He rejoices at his return from extravagance and vice, as he formerly rejoiced on the day of his nativity.—When this companion of harlots opens his mouth, *before he speaks, the father hears*. He interrupts him, in the midst of his intended speech. The overflowings of his compassionate heart can brook no delay. He seems to be *uneasy* himself, till he has made the afflicted penitent *glad*, with the assurance of his acceptance, and the choicest of his favours.—While the poor abashed offender seeks nothing more than not to be abhorred, he is thoroughly reconciled, and honoured before the whole family. While he requests no other indulgence, than only to be treated as the *meanest servant*; he is clothed with the *best robe*; he is feasted with the *fatted calf*; he is caressed as the dearest of children.—Was there ever so bright and winning a picture of the tenderest mercy, most freely vouchsafed, even to the most unworthy of creatures? Yet *thus*, my soul; and *thus*, my fellow-sinner, will the LORD GOD of everlasting compassions receive us, if, sensible of our misery, and thirsting for salvation, we turn to him through JESUS CHRIST.

Where sin has abounded, says the proclamation from the court of heaven, grace doth much more

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abound.—*Manasseh* was a monster of barbarity; for he caused his own children to pass through the fire, and filled *Jerusalem* with innocent blood. *Manasseh* was an adept in iniquity; for he not only multiplied, and to an extravagant degree, his own sacrilegious impieties; but he poisoned the principles, and perverted the manners, of his subjects, *making them to do worse than the most detestable of the Heathen idolaters* *. Yet, through this superabundant grace, he is humbled; he is reformed: and becomes a child of forgiving love, an heir of immortal glory.—Behold that bitter and bloody persecutor *Saul*; when, breathing out threatenings †, and bent

* See 2 Chron. xxxiii.

† ACTS ix. 1. Σαυλος ἐν ἐμπνεῶν ἀπειλῆς καὶ φονῆς, *Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter.*—What a representation is here of a mind, *mad with rage*, and abandoned to the fiercest extremes of barbarity! I scarce know whether I am more *shocked* at the persecutor's savage disposition, or *charmed* with the Evangelist's lively description.—The adverb *ἐν* seems referable to *chap. viii. ver. 3*, and has, in this connexion, a peculiar force. The havoc he had committed, the inoffensive families he had *already* ruined, were not sufficient to assuage his vengeful spirit. They were only a *taste*; which, instead of glutting the blood-hound, made him more closely pursue the track, and more eagerly pant for destruction.—He is *still* athirst for violence and murder. So eager and insatiable is his thirst, that he even *breathes* out threatenings and slaughter. His words are spears and arrows, and his tongue a sharp sword. 'Tis as natural for him to *menace* the Christians as to breathe the air.—Nay, they *bleed* every hour, every moment, in the purposes of his rancorous heart. It is only owing to want of power, that every syllable he utters, every breath he draws, does not deal about deaths, and cause some of the innocent disciples to fall.

upon slaughter, he worried the lambs, and put to death the disciples of JESUS. Who, upon the principles of human judgment, would not have pronounced *him* a vessel of wrath, destined to unavoidable damnation? nay, would not have been ready to conclude, that, if there were heavier chains, and a deeper dungeon, in the world of woe; they must surely be reserved for such an implacable enemy of true godliness? Yet (admire and adore the inexhaustible treasures of grace!) this *Saul* is admitted into the goodly fellowship of the prophets; is numbered with the noble army of martyrs; and makes a distinguished figure among the glorious company of the apostles.—The *Corinthians* were flagitious even to a proverb. Some of them wallowed in such abominable vices, and habituated themselves to such outrageous acts of injustice, as were a reproach to human nature. Yet even these sons of violence, and slaves of sensuality, “were washed; were sanctified; were “justified * :” *washed* in the precious blood of a dying Redeemer; *sanctified* by the powerful operations of the blessed Spirit; *justified* thro’ the infinitely-tender mercies of a gracious God. Those who were once the burden of the earth, are now the joy of heaven, and the delight of angels.

There is another instance in Scripture, which most loudly publishes that sweetest of the divine names, *The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant*

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin *. An instance this, which exceeds all the former; which exceeds whatever can be imagined; which, if I was to forget, the very stones might cry out, and sound it in my ears. I mean the case of those sinners who murdered the *Prince of Peace*, and the *LORD of glory*.—These men could scarce have the shadow of an excuse for their crime; hardly a circumstance to extenuate their guilt. They were well acquainted with his exemplary conversation; they had often heard his heavenly doctrines; they were almost daily spectators of his unequalled miracles. They therefore had all possible reason to honour him, as the most illustrious of beings; and to receive his gospel, as the most inestimable of blessings. Yet, notwithstanding all these engaging motives to love him, even above their own lives, they seize his person; asperse his character; drag him before a Heathen tribunal; and extort a sentence of death against innocence and holiness itself. Never was the vilest slave so contumeliously abused; nor the most execrable malefactor so barbarously executed. The sun was confounded at the shocking scene; and one cannot but wonder how the avenging lightnings could with-hold their flashes. The earth trembled at the horrid deed; and why, why did it not cleave asunder, and open a passage for such blood-thirsty miscreants into the nethermost hell? Shall *these* ever hope to obtain for-

* *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7:

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givenness from the righteous Judge? Shall not *these* be consigned over to inexorable wrath, and the severest torments?—O the miraculous effects of divine grace! O the triumphant goodness of GOD our Saviour! Many, even of *these* impious wretches, at the descent of the Holy Ghost, were convinced of their miserable state; were wounded with penitential remorse; fled to the sanctuary of the cross; had their pardon ratified by the baptismal seal; and, continuing in the Apostles' doctrine, were made partakers of the kingdom of heaven: where they now shine, as so many everlasting *monuments* of most distinguished *mercy*; and receive beatitude past utterance, from that very Redeemer, whom once, "with wicked hands, they crucified and slew."

Well might the prophet cry out, with a pleasing amazement, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression *!"—Let all flesh know assuredly; let all flesh rejoice greatly; that with the LORD there is *such mercy*, and with his CHRIST *such plentiful redemption*.—And, O! for the voice of an archangel, to circulate the glad tidings through the universe; that the *American* savage, as well as the *European* sage, may learn the *exceeding riches of grace* in CHRIST: thro' whose infinitely great propitiation all manner of sin, barbarity, and blasphemy, are freely forgiven unto men.

WHAT a grand and majestic *dome* is the sky! Where are the *pillars* which support the

* Mic. vii. 18.

stately concave? What art, most exactly true, balanced the pressure? What props, of insuperable strength, sustain the weight? How is that unmeasurable arch *upheld*, unshaken and unimpaired; while so many generations of busy mortals have *sunk* and disappeared, as bubbles upon the stream?—If those stars are of such an amazing bulk, how are they also *fastened* in their lofty situation? By what miracle in mechanics are so many thousands of ponderous orbs kept from falling upon our heads; kept from dashing both the worlds to pieces, and its inhabitants to death? Are they hung in golden or adamantine chains? Rest they their enormous load on rocks of marble, or columns of brass?—No; they are *pendulous* in fluid æther; yet are more immoveably *fixed* than if the everlasting mountains lent their forests for an axle tree, or their ridges for a basis. The almighty Architect *stretches out the north*, and its whole starry train, *over the empty place*. He *hangs the earth*, and all the ethereal globes, *upon nothing**. Yet are their foundations laid so sure, that they “can never be moved at any time.”

No unfit representation, to the *sincere* Christian, of his *final* perseverance †; such as points

* Job xxvi. 7.

† With regard to the *final perseverance* of the true believer, I am sensible, this point is not a little controverted.—The sentiments, which follow, are my *stedfast* belief. It is by no means proper, in a work of this nature, to enter upon a discussion of the subject. Neither have I room, so much as to hint, what might be urged for its support.—Let my

out the cause which effects it, and constitutes the pledge which ascertains it.—His nature is all enfeebled. He is not able, of himself, to think a good thought. He has no *visible* safe-

reader observe, that I am far from delivering it, as essential to Christianity, or necessary to salvation. Millions, of the very contrary conviction, are, I doubt not, high in the favour of GOD, and in a growing meetness for his heavenly kingdom. As I blame none for *rejecting*, none, I hope, will be offended with me for *espousing*, this particular doctrine.—To be of different opinions, at least in some inferior instances, seems an unavoidable consequence of our present state; where *ignorance*, in part, cleaves to the wisest minds; and *prejudice* easily besets the most impartial judgments. This may turn to our common advantage; and afford room for the display and exercise of those *healing* virtues, moderation, meekness, and forbearance.—Let me only be permitted to ask, whether this tenet does not evidently tend to establish the *comfort* of the Christian, and to magnify the *fidelity* of GOD our Saviour? whether, far from countenancing sloth, or encouraging remissness, to *know* that our labour shall not be in vain, is not the most prevailing inducement to *abound* in the work of the LORD! 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Is any one inclined to examine the reasons which made the author a proselyte to this persuasion? He may find them displayed in the Memorial, delivered by several select and eminent divines of the Church of *England*, at the renowned Synod of *Dordt*.—(See *Acta Synod. Dordrech.* par. II. page 246. of the *Latin* edition, published in a single quarto volume.)—Those who have no opportunity of consulting the memoirs of that venerable assembly, I would refer to the works of the indefatigable and very learned *Turretine*, or to those of the candid and elegant *Witsius*.—*Turret.* Tom. II. Q. xvi. *Wits.* *Oecon.* Lib. II. cap. xiii.

The latest and fullest view of the point, which I ever remember to have met with in any of our *English* writers, is, in the *Lime-street Lectures*. Which are a defence of several most important doctrines of the gospel, and contained in two octavo volumes; the united labours of *nine* modern divines; most of whom are *well* known to the world by their other

guard, nor any sufficiency of his *own*. And yet whole legions of formidable enemies are in a confederacy to compass his ruin. The *world* lays unnumbered snares for his feet: the *devil* is incessantly urging the siege, by a multitude of fiery darts, or wily temptations: the *flesh*, like a perfidious inmate, under colour of friendship, and a specious pretence of pleasure, is always forward to betray his integrity.—But, amidst all these threatening circumstances, of personal weakness, and imminent danger, an invincible aid is his defence. *I will uphold thee*, says the blessed GOD, *with the right hand of my righteousness* *. Comfortable truth! The arm, which fixes the stars in their orders, and guides the planets in their course, is stretched out to preserve the heirs of salvation.—*My sheep*, adds the great Redeemer, *are mine; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand* †. What words are these! And did they come from HIM, who hath all power in heaven, and on earth! And were they spoke

evangelical and useful writings. In those lectures, the final perseverance of the saints is very particularly stated, and, to my apprehension at least, most satisfactorily proved. The arguments, usually urged against it, are impartially considered; and I cannot but think (with all due deference to the judgment of others) unanswerably confuted.

And here (not to swell this note any farther) I shall only just hint, that the judicious *Hooker* (an authority, perhaps, as weighty and unexceptionable as any that can well be produced) gives a *solemn attestation* to this tenet, in a short discourse on the perpetuity of faith, subjoined to his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, fol. edit.

* *Isa.* xli. 10.

† *John* x. 28.

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to the weakest of the flock, to every unfeigned follower of the great Shepherd? Then, Omnipotence itself must be *vanquished*, before they can be *destroyed*, either by the seductions of fraud, or the assaults of violence.

If you ask, therefore, what security we have of enduring to the end, and continuing faithful unto death?—The very *same* that establishes the heavens, and settles the ordinances of the universe. Can *these* be thrown into confusion*? Then may the true believer draw back unto perdition. Can the sun be dislodged from his sphere, and rush lawlessly through the sky? Then, and then only, can the faith of God's elect be *finally* overthrown†.—Be of good courage then, my soul; rely on those divine succours, which are so solemnly stipulated, so faithfully promised. Though thy grace be languid as the glimmering spark; though the overflowings of corruption threaten it with total extinction; yet, since the great JEHOVAH has undertaken to cherish the dim principle, “many waters cannot quench it, nor all floods drown it.” Nay, though it were feeble as the *smoking flax*‡, goodness and faithfulness stand engaged to augment the heat; to raise the fire, and feed the flame; till it beam forth a lamp of immortal glory, in the heavens.

* Jer. xxxi. 35, 36.

† Tit. i. 2.

‡ The *tenderness* and *faithfulness* of God to his people are finely pictured by the prophet *Isaiah*, chap. xlii. ver. 3. Which passage, because of its rich consolation, and uncommon beauty, is deservedly adopted by St. *Matthew*, and ingrafted into the system of evangelical truths.—*He will not*

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As to the *faithfulness* of a covenanting God, this may be emblematically seen in the stability of the heavenly bodies, and the perpetuity of their motions*.—Those that are *fixed* or *stationary*, continue unalterable in their grand elevations. No injurious shocks, no violence of conflicting elements, are able to displace those everlasting hinges, on which dependent worlds revolve. Through the whole flight of time, they recede not, so much as a hair's breadth, from the precise central point of their respective systems.—While the *erratic*, or *planetary*, perform their prodigious stages without any intermission, or the least embarrassment. How soon, and how easily, is the most finished piece of human machinery disconcerted! But all the celestial movements are so nicely adjusted, all their

himself *break*, nor suffer to be broken by any other, *the bruised reed*; nor *quench the smoking flax*. Was it possible to have chosen two more delicate and expressive representations?—Could any image be more significant of a very infirm and enfeebled *faith*, than the *flexile reed*, that bends before every wind? which, besides its natural weakness, is made abundantly weaker by being *bruised*, and so is ready to fall in pieces of itself.—Or could any thing, with a more pathetic exactness, describe the extreme imbecillity of that other principle of the divine life, *love*? The state of the *flax*, just beginning to burn, is liable to be put out by the least blast: more liable still is the wick of the lamp, when it is not so much as kindled into a glimmering flame, but only *breathing smoke*, and uncertain whether it shall take fire or no.—Yet true faith, and heavenly love, though subsisting amidst such pitiable infirmities, will not be abandoned by their great Author; shall not be extinguished by any temptations; but be maintained, invigorated, and made finally triumphant. *Matth. xii. 20.*

* *Psal. cxix. 89, 90.*

operations so critically proportioned, and their mutual dependencies so strongly connected, that they prolong their beneficial courses throughout all ages.—While *mighty cities* are overwhelmed with ruin, and their very names lost in oblivion; while *vast empires* are swept from their foundations, and leave not so much as a shadowy trace of their ancient magnificence; while *all terrestrial* things are subject to vicissitude, and fluctuating in uncertainty: *these* are permanent in their duration; *these* are invariable in their functions. “Not one faileth.”—Who doubts the constant succession of day and night, or the regular returns of summer and winter? And why, O! why should we doubt the *veracity* of God, or distrust the *accomplishment* of his holy word? Can the ordinances of heaven depart? Then only can God forget to be gracious, or neglect the performance of his promise.—Nay our LORD gives us yet firmer ground of assurance. He affords us a surer bottom for our faith, than the *fundamental laws* of the universe. *Heaven and earth*, he says, *shall pass away*; but *my words shall not*, in a single instance, or in one tittle of their import, *pass away*. No: his sacred word, whatever may obstruct it, whoever may oppose it, shall be fulfilled to the very uttermost.

O powerful word! How astonishing is its efficacy! When this word was issued forth, a thousand worlds emerged out of nothing. Should the mighty orders be repeated, a thousand more would spring into existence. By this

word, the vast system of created things is *upheld*, in constant and immutable perfection. Should it give command, or cease to exert its energy; the universal frame would be dissolved, and all Nature revert to her original chaos. And this very word is *pledged* for the safety, the comfort, the happiness, of the godly. This inviolable, this almighty word, *speaks* in all the promises of the gospel.—How strangely infatuated are our souls, that we should value it so little? What infidels are we in fact, that we should depend upon it no more? Did it *create* whatever has a being; and shall it not *work* faith in our breasts? Do unnumbered worlds owe their support to this word; and shall it not be sufficient to buoy up our souls in troubles, or establish them in trials? Is it the *life* of the universe, and shall it be a *dead* letter to mankind?

If I wish to be heard, when I implore heavenly blessings; is not *this privilege* most clearly made over to my enjoyment, in that well-known text, “Ask, and it shall be given you *?” —If I long for the eternal Comforter to dwell in my heart, and sanctify my nature; have I not an apparent title to this *high prerogative*, conferred in that sweet assertive interrogation; “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him †?” —If I earnestly covet the inestimable treasures that are comprised in the great IMMANUEL’s mediation; can I have a firmer claim to the *noble portion*, than is granted in that most pre-

* *Matth. vii. 7.*

† *Luke xi. 13.*

cious Scripture ; “ Him that cometh to me, “ I will in no wise cast out * ?”—What assurance of being interested in these unspeakable mercies would I desire ? What *form of conveyance*, what *deed of settlement*, were it left to my own option, should I chuse ? Here is the word of a King ; the KING immortal and invisible ; all whose declarations † are truth itself.—If a monarch bestow immunities on a body of men, and confirm them by an authentic charter ; no one controverts, no one questions, their right to the royal favours. And why should we suspect the *validity* of those glorious grants, which are made by the everlasting Sovereign of nature ; which he has also *ratified* by an oath, and *sealed* with the blood of his Son ?—Corporations may be disfranchised, and charters revoked. Even mountains may be removed, and stars drop from their spheres. But a tenure founded on the divine promise is unalienably *secure*, is *lasting* as eternity itself.

WE have endeavoured to spell a *syllable* of the eternal name in the ancient manuscript of the sky. We have caught a *glimpse* of the Almighty’s glory from the lustre of innumerable stars. But would we behold all his excellencies poutrayed in *full* perfection, and drawn to the very life ; let us attentively consider the REDEEMER.—I observe, there are some parts of the

* *John vi. 37.*

† ———— If *these* fail,
The pillar’d firmament is rottenness,
And earth’s base built on stubble.

MILT. *Comus.*

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firmament, in which the stars seem, as it were, to *cluster*. They are sown thicker, they lie closer than usual; and strike the eye with redoubled splendour. Like the jewels on a crown, they mingle their beams, and reflect an increase of brilliancy on each other.—Is there not such an assemblage, such a *constellation* of the divine honours, most amiably effulgent in the blessed JESUS.

Does not infinite *Wisdom** shine, with surpassing brightness, in CHRIST? To the making of a world, there was no obstacle; but to the saving of man, there seemed to be unsurmountable bars. If the rebel is suffered to escape; where is the *inflexible justice*, which denounces “death as the wages of sin?” If the offender is thoroughly pardoned; where is the *inviolable veracity*, which has solemnly declared, “The soul that sinneth shall die?” These awful attributes are set in terrible array; and, like an impenetrable battalion, oppose the salvation of apostate mankind. Who can suggest a method to *absolve* the traiterous race, yet vindicate the honours of almighty Sovereignty? This is an intricacy, which the most exalted of finite intelligencies are unable to clear.—But behold the *unsearchable secret* revealed! revealed in the wonderful redemption accomplished by a dying Saviour! so plainly revealed, that “he who runs may read;” and even *babes* understand what minds of the deepest penetration could not contrive.—The Son of God, taking

* See the next note.

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our nature, obeys the law, and undergoes death, in our stead. By this means the threatened *curse* is executed in all its rigour, and free *grace* is exercised in all its riches. Justice maintains her rights, and, with a steady hand, administers impartial vengeance; while Mercy dispenses her pardons, and welcomes the repentant criminal into the tenderest embraces. Hereby the seemingly-thwarting attributes are reconciled. The sinner is saved, not only in *full consistence* with the honour of the supreme perfections, but to the most *illustrious manifestation* of them all.

Where does the divine *Power* * so signally exert itself, as in the cross of CHRIST, and in the conquests of grace?—Our LORD, in his lowest state of humiliation, gained a more glorious victory, than when, through the dividing sea, and the waste howling wilderness, he “rode” upon his chariots and horses of salvation.” When his hands were rivetted, with irons, to the bloody tree; he disarmed Death of its sting, and plucked the prey from the jaws of Hell. Then, even then, while he was crucified in *weakness*, he vanquished the *strong man*, and subdued our most formidable enemies. Even then, he spoiled principalities, triumphed over the powers of darkness, and led captivity captive.—Now he is exalted to his heavenly throne,

* CHRIST, the wisdom of GOD, and the power of GOD. 1 Cor. i. 24.—To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church (by the amazing contrivance, and accomplishment of its redemption) the deep, extensive, and πολυτοιχιος) greatly-diversified wisdom of GOD. Eph. iii. 10.

with what a prevailing efficacy does his grace go forth, "conquering, and to conquer?"—By this, the *slaves* of sin are rescued from their bondage, and restored to the *liberty* of righteousness. By this depraved wretches, whose appetites were *sensual*, and their dispositions *devilish*, are not only renewed, but renewed after the image of God, and made partakers of a *divine* nature. Millions, millions of lost creatures are snatched, by the interposition of grace, like *brands* from the burning; and, translated into everlasting mansions, shine brighter than the *stars*, shine bright as the *sun*, in the kingdom of their Father.

Would you then see an incomparably more bright display of the divine excellence than the unspotted firmament, the spangles of heaven, or the golden fountain of day, exhibit? Contemplate *JESUS* of *Nazareth*. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. In his immaculate nature, in his heavenly tempers, in his most holy life, the *moral* *perfections* of the Deity are represented to the highest advantage*.—Hark! how *Mercy*, with her charming voice, speaks in all he utters, See! how *Benevolence* pours her choicest stores, in all he does. Did ever *Compassion* look so amiably soft, as in these pitying tears, which swelled his eyes, and tricked down his cheeks, to bedew the rancour of his inveterate enemies?—Was it possible for *Patience* to assume a form

* In this sense, that saying of our LORD is eminently true, *He that has seen ME, has seen the FATHER.* John iv. 9.

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so lovely, as that sweetly winning conduct, which bore the contradiction of sinners? which entreated the obstinate to be reconciled, besought the guilty not to die?—In other things, we may find some *scattered* rays of JEHOVAH's glory; but in CHRIST they are all collected and united. In CHRIST they beam forth, with the strongest radiance, with the most delightful effulgence. *Out of Sion, and in Sion's great Redeemer, hath GOD appeared in perfect beauty.*

Search then, my soul, above all other pursuits, search the records of redeeming love. Let these be the principal objects of thy study. Here employ thyself with the most unwearied assiduity.—*In these are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* *. Such wisdom as charms, and astonishes the very angels; engages their closest attention, and fills them with the deepest adoration †. Such knowledge, as qualifies the posses-

* *Coloss.* ii. 3.—Not a mean degree, but a *treasure*; not one treasure, but *many*; not many only, but *all* treasures, of true wisdom, and saving knowledge; are in CHRIST, and his glorious gospel.—The transcendent excellency of those treasures seems to be finely intimated, in that other expression ἀποκρυφαι, *hid*; (which may be interpreted by the Hebrew כסמיו, *Joh* iii. 21.) *laid up*, with the utmost care, and the greatest safety. Not left at all adventures, to be stumbled upon by every giddy wanderer; or to fall into the arms of the yawning sluggard; but, like jewels of the brightest lustre, or riches of the highest value, *kept in store* to adorn and reward the diligent searcher.

† This, I believe, is the *import* of the Apostle's language, though it is not a *literal* translation of τις ἀπικρυμμένη ἀρετή παρὰ σοφίας, 1 *Pet.* i. 12.—I never had such a lively apprehension of the beautiful significancy of the last word, as when I have attended a dissection of some part of the ani-

for, if not for offices of dignity on earth, yet for the most honourable advancements in the kingdom of heaven. Disunited from which knowledge, all application is but elaborate impertinence; and all science, no better than pompous ignorance.—These records contain the faultless model of duty, and the noblest motives to obedience. Nothing so powerful to work a lively faith, and a joyful hope, as an attentive consideration of our LORD's unutterable merits. Nothing so sovereign to antidote the pestilential influence of the world, and deliver our affections from a slavery to ignoble objects, as an habitual remembrance of his extreme agonies. The genuine, the ever-fruitful source of all morality, is the unfeigned love of CHRIST; and the cross, the CROSS, is the appointed altar*, from which we may fetch a coal †, to inkindle this sacred fire.

mal body. In order to discern the *minutiae* of the admirable frame, the latent wonders of art and mechanism, the eye is so sharpened, and its application so *intensely bended*, as gives a very just *experimental* comment on that expressive phrase, *κατανοεῖν*.—With such earnest attention is the everlasting gospel contemplated by the *angelic* orders! How much more, if it were possible, does it deserve the devout and incessant consideration of *human* minds? since, by *them*, it is not only to be speculated, as a bright and ravishing display of the divine attributes; but to be applied to their fallen nature, as a most benign scheme of *recovering* grace; as the sure and only method of obtaining life and immortality

* And I, says our LORD, if I be lifted up from the earth, and extended on the cross, will draw all men unto me; will give such a rich and transcendent display of my love, as shall constitute the most powerful and prevailing attractive of theirs. John xii. 32.

† Alluding to *Isa.* vi. 6.

*Behold, therefore, the man ; the matchless and stupendous Man ; whose practice was a pattern of the most exalted virtue, and his person the mirror of every divine perfection. Examine the memoirs of his heavenly temper, and exemplary conversation. Contemplate that choir of graces which were associated in his mind, and shed the highest lustre on all his actions. Familiarize to thy thoughts his instructive discourses, and enter into the very spirit of his refined doctrines : that the graces may be transfused into thy breast, and the doctrines transcribed in thy life. — Follow him to *Calvary's* horrid eminence ; to *Calvary's* fatal catastrophe : where innocence, dignity, and merit, were made perfect through sufferings ; each shining, with all splendour, through the tragical scene ; somewhat like his own radiant bow, then glowing with the greatest beauty, when appearing on the darkest cloud. — Be thy most constant attention fixed on that lovely and sorrowful spectacle. Behold the spotless victim nailed to the tree, and stabbed to the heart. Hear him pouring out prayers for his murderers, before he poured out his soul for transgressors. See the wounds that stream with forgiveness, and bleed balm for a distempered world. O ! see the justice of the Almighty and his goodness ; his mercy and his vengeance ; every tremendous and gracious attribute manifested, manifested with inexpressible glory, in that most ignominious, yet grandest, of transactions.*

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SINCE God is so inconceivably great, as these his marvellous works declare ;

Since the great Sovereign sends ten thousand worlds,
To tell us, he resides above them all,
In Glory's unapproachable recess * ;

how can we forbear hastening, with *Moses*, bowing ourselves to the earth, and worshipping? O! what an honourable, as well as advantageous, employ is prayer!—*Advantageous*. By prayer, we cultivate that improving correspondence with JEHOVAH, we carry on that gladdening intercourse with his SPIRIT, which must begin here, in order to be completed in eternity.—*Honourable*. By prayer, we have access to that mighty Potentate, whose sceptre sways universal Nature, and whose rich regalia fill the skies with lustre. Prayer places us in his presence-chamber ; while “ the blood of sprinkling” procures us a gracious audience.

Shall I then *blush* to be found prostrate before the throne of grace ? Shall I be *ashamed* to have it known, that I offer up social suppli-

* For this *quotation*, and several valuable *hints*, I acknowledge myself indebted to those beautiful and sublime poems, entitled, *Night-Thoughts*.—Of which I shall only say, that I receive fresh pleasure, and richer improvement, from every renewed perusal. And, I think, I shall have reason to bless the indulgent Bestower of all wisdom, for those instructive and animating compositions, even in my last moments. Than which nothing can more emphatically speak their *superior excellence*, nor give a more solid satisfaction to their worthy author.—Happy should I think myself, if these little sketches of contemplative devotion might be honoured with the *most inferior* degree of the same success ; might receive a testimony, not from the voice of Fame, but from the dying lips of some edified Christian.

cations in the family, or am conscientious in observing my private retirements? Rather, let me glory in this unspeakable privilege. Let me reckon it the *noblest* posture, to fall low on my knees before his footstool; and the *highest* honour, to enjoy communion with his most exalted Majesty.—Incomparably more noble, than to sit, in person, on the triumphal chariot; or to stand, in effigy, amidst the temple of worthies.

Most inestimable, in such a view, is that promise, which so often occurs in the prophetic writings, and is the crowning benefit of the new covenant, *I will be thy God**.—Will this supremely excellent and almighty Being vouchsafe to be *my* portion? to settle upon a poor sinner, not the heritage of a county, not the possession of the whole earth, but his *own* ever-blessed *Self*? May I then, through his free condescending grace, and the unknown merits of his Son, look upon all these infinitely-noble attributes as my treasure? May I regard the *wisdom*, which superintends such a multitude of worlds, as my guide; the *power*, which produced, and preserves them in existence, as my guard; the *goodness*, which, by an endless communication of favours, renders them all so many habitations of happiness as *my exceeding great reward*?—What a fund of felicity is included in such a blessing! How often does the *Israelitish* prince exult in the assurance, that this unutterable and boundless good is his own? Interested

* Heb. viii 10.

in this, he bids defiance to every evil that can be dreaded, and rests in certain expectation of every blessing that can be desired. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The LORD, with an air of exultation, he repeats both his assiance and his challenge, is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid**? Nothing so effectual, as this appropriating faith, to inspire a dignity of mind, superior to transitory trifles; or to create a calmness of temper, unalarmed by vulgar fears, unappalled by death itself.—*The LORD is my Shepherd*, says the same truly gallant, and heroic personage: *therefore shall I lack nothing*†. How is it possible he should suffer want, who has the all-sufficient Fulness for his supply? So long as unerring Wisdom is capable of contriving the means, so long as uncontrollable Power is able to execute them; such a one cannot fail of being safe and happy, whether he continue amidst the vicissitudes of time, or depart into unchangeable eternity.

Here, let us stand a moment, and humbly contemplate this great God, together with ourselves, in a relative view.—If we reflect on the works of *material* nature, their number incomprehensible, and their extent unmeasurable; each of them apart, so admirably framed; the connexions of the whole so exquisitely regulated; and all derived from one and the same glorious Agent:—If we recollect the far more noble accomplishments of elegant taste, and discerning judgment; of refined affections, and exalted

* *Psal.* xxvii. 1.

† *Psal.* xxiii. 1.

sentiments ; which are to be found among the several orders of *intelligent* existence ; and all of them flowing, in rich emanations, from the one sole Fountain of intellectual light :—If we farther consider this Author of material beauty, and moral excellency, as a *Guardian*, a *Governor*, and *Benefactor* to all his creatures ; supporting the whole system, and protecting each individual, by an ever-watchful Providence ; presiding over the minutest affairs, and causing all events to terminate in the most extensive good ; heaping, with unremitted liberality, his benefits upon every capable object, and making the circuit of the universe a seminary of happiness :—Is it possible for the human heart, under such captivating views, to be *indifferent* towards this most benign, most bountiful Original of being and of bliss ? Can any be so immersed in stupidity, as to say unto the Almighty, —in the language of an irreligious temper, and licentious life, to say, “ Depart from us ; we “ implore not thy favour : nor desire the knowledge of thy ways.”—Wonder, O *heavens* ! be amazed, O *earth* ! and let the inhabitants of *both* express their astonishment, at this unparalleled complication of disingenuous, ungrateful, destructive perverseness !

If we consider our *fallen* and *imperfect* state ; frail in our bodies ; enfeebled in our minds ; in every part of our constitution, and in all the occurrences of life, “ like a tottering wall, or “ a broken hedge :”—If we survey our *indigent* and *infirm* state, without holiness, without spi-

ritual strength; our possession of present conveniencies entirely dependent on GOD's sovereign pleasure; yea, forfeited, justly forfeited, with every future hope, by a thousand aggravated iniquities:—If we add the various *disasters* of our condition; agitated as we are by tumultuous passions; oppressed with dispiriting fears; held in suspense by a variety of perplexing cares*; liable to pains, and exposed to troubles; troubles from every quarter; troubles of every kind:—Can we, amidst so many wants, under such deplorable infirmities, and subject to such disastrous accidents,—can we be unconcerned, whether GOD's omnipotent, irresistible, all-conducting hand be *against* us, or *for* us? Imagination itself shudders at the thought!—Can we rest satisfied, without a well-grounded persuasion, that we are *reconciled* to this supreme

* *Perplexing*.—Those who read the original language of the New Testament, are sufficiently apprised, that such is the *significancy* of that benevolent dissuasive urged by our LORD, *Μη μεριμνατε*, *Matth. vi. 25*.—I beg leave, for the sake of the *unlearned* reader, to observe, that our translation, though for the most part faithful and excellent, has here misrepresented our Divine Master's meaning. *Take no thought* for your food, for your raiment, for your bodily welfare, is not only not the true sense, but the very reverse of this scriptural doctrine. We are required to take a *prudent* and *moderate* thought for the necessities of life. The sluggard who neglects this decent precaution, is severely reprimanded; is sent to one of the meanest animals, to blush for his folly, and learn discretion from her conduct, *Prov. vi. 6*. Our Saviour's precept, and the exact sense of his expression, is, *Take no anxious thought*; indulge no *perplexing* care; no such care, as may argue an unreasonable *distrust* of Providence, or may *rend* and *tear* your minds with distressing, with pernicious solicitude.

LORD, and the objects of his unchangeable goodness!—If there be an abandoned wretch, whose apprehensions are so fatally blinded; who is so utterly lost to all sense of his duty, and of his interest; let me bewail his *miser*y, while I abhor his impiety; bewail his misery, though Popularity, with her choicest laurels, adorn his brow; though Affluence, with her richest delicacies, load his table; though half a nation, or half a world, conspire to call him *happy*.

May I, by a believing application, solace myself in this everlasting source of love, perfection, and joy! Grant me this request, and I ask no more.—Only, that I may expect, not with a reluctant anxiety, but with a ready cheerfulness, the arrival of that important hour, when this veil of flesh shall drop, and the shadows of mortality flee away: when I shall no longer complain of *obscure* knowledge, *languid* affections, and *imperfect* fruition;—but shall see the uncreated and immortal Majesty; *see* him, not in this distant and unaffecting method of reasoning from his works; but with the most clear and direct intuition of the mind:—when I shall *love* him, not with a cold and contracted spirit; but with the most lively and enlarged emotions of gratitude:—when I shall incessantly *enjoy* the light of his countenance; and be united, inseparably united to his all-glorious GODHEAD.—Take, ye ambitious, unenvied and unopposed, take to yourselves the toys of state. May I be enabled to *rejoice* in this blessed hope; and to

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triumph in that amiable, that adorable, that delightful name, the LORD MY GOD ! And I shall scarce bestow a thought on the splendid pageantry of the world, unless it be to *despise* its empty pomp, and to *pity* its deluded admirers.

ALL these bodies, though immense in their size, and almost infinite in their multitude, are *obedient* to the divine command. The GOD of wisdom "tellet^h their numbers," and is intimately acquainted with their various properties. The GOD of power "callet^h them all by their names," and assigns them whatsoever office he pleases. He *marshals* all the starry legions, with infinitely greater ease, and nicer order, than the most expert general arranges his disciplined troops. He appoints their *posts* ; he marks their *route* ; he fixes the time for their *return*. The posts which he appoints, they occupy without fail. In the route which he settles, they persevere, without the least deviation. And to the instant * which he fixes for their return, they are precisely punctual.—He has given them a *law*, which, through a long revolution of ages, shall not be broken, unless his sovereign will interposes for its *repeal*. Then, indeed, the motion of the celestial orbs is controlled ; their action remains suspended ; or their influence receives a new direction.—The *sun*, at his

* "The planets, and all the innumerable host of heavenly bodies, perform their courses and revolutions, with so much certainty and exactness, as never once to fail ; but, for almost 6000 years, come constantly about to the same period, in the hundredth part of a minute."

STACKHOUSE's *History of the Bible*.

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creation, issued forth with a command, to travel perpetually through the heavens. Since which, he has never neglected to perform the great circuit; "rejoicing as a giant to run his race." But, when it is requisite to accomplish the purposes of divine love, the orders are countermanded; the flaming courier remits his career; *stands still in Gibeon* *; and for the conveniency of the chosen people, holds back the falling day.—The *moon* was dispatched with a charge, never to intermit her revolving course, till day and night come to an end. But when the children of Providence are to be favoured with an uncommon continuance of light, she halts in her march, makes a solemn pause *in the valley of Ajalon* †, and delays to bring on her attendant train of shadows.—When the enemies of the LORD are to be discomfited, the *stars* are levied into the service; the stars are armed, and take the field; *the stars, in their courses, fought against Sisera* ‡.

* This is spoken in conformity to the Scripture language, and according to the common notion. With respect to the power which affected the alteration, it is much the same thing, and alike miraculous, whether the sun, or the earth, be supposed to move.

† *Josh. x. 12. 13*—The prophet *Habukkuk*, according to his lofty manner, celebrates this event; and points out, in very poetical diction, the designs of so surprising a miracle.—*The sun and the moon stood still in their habitation; in the light, the long-continued and miraculous light, thy arrows, edged with destruction, walked on their awful errand; in the clear shining of the day, protracted for this very purpose, thy glittering spear, launched by thy people, but guided by thy hand, sprung to its prey. Hab. iii. 11.*

‡ *Judg. v. 20.*—The scriptural phrase *fought against*, will,

So dutiful is material Nature ! so obsequious, in *all her forms*, to her Creator's pleasure !—The bellowing thunders listen to his voice ; and the volleyed lightnings observe the direction of his eye. The flying storm, and impetuous whirlwind, wear his yoke. The raging waves revere his nod ; they shake the earth ; they dash the skies ; yet never offer to pass the limits which he has prescribed.—Even the planetary spheres, though vastly *larger* than this wide-extended earth, are in his hand, as *clay* in the hands of the potter. Though, *swifter* than the northern blast, they sweep the long tracts of æther ; yet are they guided by his reins, and execute whatever he enjoins.—All those enormous globes of *central* fire, which beam through the boundless azure, in comparison of which an army of planets were like a swarm of summer-insects ; those, even those, are conformable to

I hope, be a proper warrant for every expression I have used on this occasion.—The passage is generally supposed to signify, that some very dreadful *meteors* (which the stars were thought to influence), such as fierce flashes of lightning, impetuous showers of rain, and rapid storms of hail, were employed by the Almighty to terrify, annoy, and overthrow, the enemies of *Israel*. If so, there cannot be a more clear and lively paraphrase on the text, than those fine lines of a Jewish writer.—*His severe wrath shall HE sharpen for a sword ; and the world shall fight with him against the ungodly. Then shall the right-aiming thunderbolts go abroad ; and from the clouds, as from a well-drawn bow, shall they fly to the mark. And hail-stones, full of wrath, shall be cast out of a stone-bow ; and the water of the sea shall rage against them ; and the floods (as was the case of the river Kishon) shall cruelly drown them ; yea, a mighty wind shall stand up against them ; and like a storm, shall blow them away.* Wisd. v. 20,—23.

his will, as the *melting wax* to the impressed seal.—Since *all*, ALL is obedient, throughout the whole ascent of things. Shall man be the *only rebel* against the almighty Maker? Shall these unruly *appetites* reject his government, and refuse their allegiance? Shall these headstrong *passions* break loose from divine restraint, and run wild, in exorbitant sallies, after their own imaginations?

O my soul, be stung with remorse, and overwhelmed with confusion, at the thought! Is it not a righteous thing, that the blessed God should sway the sceptre, with the most absolute authority, over all the creatures which his power has formed? especially over those creatures, whom his distinguishing favour has endued with the noble principle of reason, and made capable of a blissful immortality? Sure, if all the ranks of inanimate existence conform to their Maker's decree, by the *necessity* of their nature; this more excellent race of beings should pay their equal homage, by the *willing* compliance of their affections*.—Come then, all ye *faculties*

* This argument, I acknowledge, is not absolutely conclusive. But it is popular and striking. Nor can I think myself obliged, in such a work, where *fancy* bears a considerable sway, to proceed always with the caution and exactness of a *disputer* in the *schools*. If there be some appearance of analogy between the fact and the inference, it seems sufficient for my purpose; though the deduction should not be necessary, nor the process strictly syllogistical.—One of the *apostolic fathers* has an affecting and sublime paragraph, which runs entirely in this form: Ηλιος τε και σεληνη, αστερων τε χοροι, καλα την διαταγην αυτην εν ομολογια, διχα πασης παρεκκασεως, εξελισσυσιν τας επιταγμενους αυτοις ορισμους. The

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of my *mind*; come, all ye *powers* of my *body*; give up yourselves, without a moment's delay, without the least reserve, to his governance. Stand, like dutiful servants, at his footstool; in an everlasting readiness to *do* whatsoever he requires; to *be* whatsoever he appoints: to further, with united efforts, the purposes of his glory in this earthly scene; or else to separate, without reluctance, at his summons; the *one*, to sleep in the silent dust; the *other*, to advance his honour, in some remoter colony of his kingdom.—Thus may I join with all the works of the LORD, in all places of his dominion, to recognize his universal supremacy; and proclaim him Sovereign of souls, as well as Ruler of worlds.

AT my first coming abroad, all these luminaries were *eclipsed*, by the overpowering lustre of the sun. They were all placed in the very same stations, and played the same sprightly beams; yet not one of them was seen. As the day-light wore away, and the sober shades advanced, *Hesperus*, who leads the starry train, disclosed his radiant forehead, and caught my eye. While I stood gazing on his bright and beautiful aspect, several of his attendants peeped

sun, the moon, and the starry choir, without the least deviation, and with the utmost harmony, perform the revolutions appointed them by the supreme decree. From which remark, and abundance of other similar instances, observable in the œconomy of Nature, he exhorts Christians to a cordial unanimity among themselves, and a dutiful obedience to God. Vid. Clem. Roman. ep. 1. ad Corinth. §. 20.—See also a beautiful Ode in Dr. Watts's Lyric Poems, entitled, The Comparison and Complaint, which turns upon this very thought.

through the blue curtains. Scarce had I turned to observe these fresh emanations of splendour, but others dropt the veil, others stole into view. When, lo! faster and more numerous, multitudes sprung from obscurity; they poured, in shining troops, and in sweet confusion, over all the empyrean plain; till the firmament seemed like one vast constellation; and "a flood of glory burst from all the skies."

Is not such the *rise*, and such the *progress*, of a true *conversion*, in the prejudiced infidel, or inattentive sinner? During the period of his vainer years, a thousand interesting truths lay utterly undiscovered; a thousand momentous concerns were entirely disregarded. But, when divine Grace dissipates the delusive glitter which dazzled his understanding, and beguiled his affections; then he begins to discern, dimly to discern, the things which belong unto his peace. Some admonition of Scripture darts conviction into his soul, as the glimmering of a star pierces the gloom of night.—Then, perhaps, another awful, or cheering text, impresses terror, or diffuses comfort. A *threatening* alarms his fears, or a *promise* awakens his hopes. This, possibly, is succeeded by some *afflictive* dispensation of Providence; and improved by some edifying and instructive conversation. All which is established as to its continuance, and enlarged as to its influence, by a diligent study of the sacred word.—By this means, new truths continually pour their evidence. Scenes of refined and exalted, but hitherto unknown, delight, address

him with their attractives. New desires take wing; new pursuits are set on foot. A new turn of mind forms his temper; a new habit of conversation regulates his life. In a word, *old things are passed away, and all things become new.* He who was sometime darkness, is now light, and life, and joy, in the LORD.

THE more attentively I view the crystal concave, the more fully I discern the richness of its decorations. Abundance of minuter lights, which lay concealed from a *superficial* notice, are visible on a *closer* examination. Especially in those tracts of the sky, which are called the *galaxy*; and are distinguishable by a sort of milky path. There the stars are crowded, rather than disseminated. The region seems to be all on a blaze, with their splendid rays.—Besides this vast profusion, which in my present situation the eye discovers; was I to make my survey, from any other part of the globe, lying nearer the southern pole, I should behold a *new choir* of starry bodies, which have never appeared within our horizon.—Was I, (which is still more wonderful), either here or there, to view the firmament with the virtuoso's glass; I should find a prodigious multitude of flaming orbs, which, immersed in depths of æther, escape the keenest unassisted sight*.—Yet, in these various

* Come forth, O man, yon azure round survey,
And view those lamps, which yield eternal day.
Being forth thy glasses; clear thy wond'ring eyes;
Millions beyond the former millions rise:
Look farther;—millions more blaze from remoter skies. }

See an ingenious poem, entitled The UNIVERSE.

situations, even with the aid of the telescopic tube, I should not be able to descry the half, perhaps not a *thousandth* part, of those majestic luminaries, which the vast expansive heavens contain*.—So, the more diligently I pursue my search into those oracles of eternal truth, the *Scriptures*; I perceive a wider, a deeper, an ever-increasing fund of spiritual treasures. I perceive the brighter strokes of wisdom, and the richer displays of goodness; a more transcendent excellency in the illustrious Messiah, and a more deplorable vileness in fallen man; a more immaculate purity in God's law, and more precious privileges in his gospel. Yet, after a course of study, ever so assiduous ever so prolonged, I should have reason to own myself a mere *babe* in heavenly knowledge; or, at most, but a *puerile* proficient in the school of CHRIST.

AFTER all my most accurate inspection, those starry orbs appear but as *glittering points*. Even the planets, though so much nearer our earthly mansion, seem only like burning *bullets*. If then we have such *imperfect apprehensions* of

* How noble, considered in this view, are the celebrations of the Divine Majesty, which frequently occur in the sacred writings! *It is the LORD that made the heavens.* Psal. xcvi. 5.—What a prodigious dignity does such a sense of things give to that devout ascription of praise! *Thou, even thou, art LORD alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host.* Nehem. ix. 6.—Examined by this rule, the beautiful climax in our inspired hymn is sublime beyond compare. *Praise HIM, sun and moon; praise HIM, all ye stars of light; praise HIM, ye heavens of heavens.* Psal. cxlviii. 3, 4.

visible and material things; how much more scanty and inadequate must be our notions of invisible and immortal objects!—We behold the stars. Though every one is incomparably bigger than the globe we inhabit, yet they dwindle, upon our survey, into the most diminutive forms. Thus, we see by faith the glories of the blessed Jesus; the atoning efficacy of his death; the justifying merit of his righteousness; and the joys which are reserved for his followers. But, alas! even our most *exalted* ideas are vastly *below* the truth; as much below the truth, as the report which our eyes make of those celestial edifices, is inferior to their real grandeur.—Should we take in all the *magnifying* assistances which Art has contrived; those luminous bodies would elude our skill, and appear as *small* as ever. Should an inhabitant of earth travel towards the cope of heaven; and be carried forwards, in his aerial journey, more than a hundred and sixty millions of miles*; even in that advanced situation, those *oceans* of *flame* would look no larger than *radiant specks*.—In like manner, conceive ever so magnificently of the Redeemer's honours, and of the bliss which he has purchased for his people; yet you will fall short. Raise your imagination

* This, incredible as it may seem, is not a mere supposition, but a real fact. For about the twenty-first of December, we are above 160,000,000 of miles nearer the northern parts of the sky, than we were at the twenty-first of June. And yet, with regard to the stars situate in that quarter, we perceive no *change* in their *aspect*, nor any *augmentation* of their *magnitude*.

higher; stretch your invention wider; give them all the scope which a soaring and excursive fancy can take; still your conceptions will be extremely disproportionate to their genuine perfections. Vast are the bodies which roll in the expanse of heaven; vaster far are those fields of æther, through which they run their endless round: but the excellency of JESUS, and the happiness laid up for his servants, are greater than either, than both, than all. An inspired writer calls the former, "the unsearchable riches of CHRIST;" and styles the latter, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory."

IF those stars are so many inexhaustible magazines of fire, and immense reservoirs of light; there is no reason to doubt, but they have some very *grand uses*, suitable to the magnificence of their nature. To specify or explain the particular purposes they answer is altogether impossible, in our present state of distance and ignorance. This, however, we may clearly discern; they are disposed in that very manner which is most *pleasing* and most *serviceable* to mankind. — They are not placed at an *infinite remove*, so as to lie beyond our sight; neither are they brought *so near* our abode, as to annoy us with their beams. We see them shine on every side. The deep azure, which serves them as a ground, heightens their splendour. At the same time, their influence is gentle, and their rays are destitute of heat. So that we are surrounded with a multitude of fiery globes, which beautify and illuminate the firmament, without any risk

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either to the *coolness* of our night, or the *quiet* of our repose.—Who can sufficiently admire that wondrous benignity, which, on our account, strews the *earth* with blessings of every kind, and vouchsafes to make the *very heavens* subservient to our delight ?

It is not solely to adorn the roof of our palace with costly gildings, that God commands the celestial luminaries to glitter through the gloom. We also reap considerable benefits from their ministry.—They *divide* our *time*, and fix its solemn periods. They settle the *order* of our *works* ; and are, according to the destination mentioned in sacred writ, “ for signs, and for seasons ; for days, and for years.” The returns of heat and cold alone, would have been too precarious a rule. But these radiant bodies, by the *variation*, and also by the *regularity*, of their motions, afford a method of calculating, absolutely certain, and sufficiently obvious. By this, the *farmer* is instructed when to commit his grain to the furrows, and how to conduct the operations of husbandry. By this, the *sailor* knows when to proceed on his voyage with least peril, and how to carry on the business of navigation with most success.

Why should not the Christian, the probationer for eternity, learn from the same monitors, to *number*—for nobler purposes, to number his *days* ; and duly to transact the grand, grand affairs of his everlasting salvation ? Since God has appointed so many bright measurers of our time, to determine its larger periods,

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and to minute down its ordinary stages; sure this most strongly inculcates its *value*, and should powerfully prompt us to *improve* it.—Behold! the supreme LORD marks the progress of our life, in that most conspicuous kalendar above. Does not such an ordination tell us, and in the most emphatical language, that our life is given for *use*, not for *waste*? that no portion of it is delivered, but under a strict account; that all of it is entered, as it passes, in the divine register; and, therefore, that the stewards of such a talent are to expect a future reckoning? Behold! the very heavens are bidden to be the *accountants* of our years, and months, and days. O! may this induce us to manage them with a vigilant frugality; to part with them, as misers with their *hoarded treasure*, warily and circumspectly; and, if possible, as merchants with their *rich commodities*, not without an equivalent, either in personal improvement, or social usefulness!

How *bright* the starry diamonds shine! 'The ambition of eastern monarchs could imagine no distinction more noble and sublime than that of being likened to those beaming orbs*, They form Night's *richest dress*; and sparkle upon her sable robe, like jewels of the finest lustre. Like jewels! I wrong their character. The lucid stone has no brilliancy; quenched is the flame even of the golden topaz, compared with those glowing decorations of heaven.—How widely are their radiant honours *diffused*!

* Numb. xxiv. 17.

Dan. viii. 10.

No nation so remote, but sees their beauty, and rejoices in their usefulness. They have been admired by all preceding generations; and every rising age will gaze on their charms, with renewed delight.—How *animating*, then, is that promise made to the faithful ministers of the gospel! “They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever *.” Is not this a most winning encouragement, “to spend, and be spent,” in the service of souls? Methinks, the stars beckon, as they twinkle. Methinks, they shew me their splendours, on purpose to inspire me with *alacrity* in the race set before me; on purpose to enliven my *activity* in the work that is given me to do.—Yes; ye majestic monitors, I understand your meaning. If honour has any charms; if true glory, the glory which cometh from God, is any attractive; you display the most powerful incitements to exercise all assiduity in my holy vocation. I will, henceforth, observe your intimation; and, when zeal becomes *languid*, have recourse to your heavenly lamps; if so be I may *rekindle* its ardour at those inextinguishable fires.

OF the *polar* star, it is observable, that while other luminaries *alter* their situation, this seems invariably *fixed* †. While other luminaries,

* Dan. xii. 3.

† I speak in conformity to the *appearance* of the object. For though this remarkable star revolves round the pole, its motion is so *slow*, and the circle it describes so *small*, as render both the revolution and change of situation hardly perceivable.

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now, mount the battlements of heaven, and appear upon duty; now retire beneath the horizon, and resign to a fresh set the watches of the night; this never departs from its station. This, in every season, maintains an uniform position; and is always to be found in the same tract of the northern sky.—How often has this beamed bright intelligence on the *sailor*; and conducted the keel to its desired haven! In early ages, those who went down to the sea in ships, and occupied their business in great waters, had scarce any other sure guide for their wandering vessel. This therefore they viewed with the most solicitous attention. By this they formed their observations, and regulated their voyage. When this was obscured by clouds, or enveloped in mists, the trembling mariner was *bewildered* on the watery waste. His thoughts fluctuated as much as the floating surge; and he knew not *where* he was advanced, or *whither* he should steer. But when this auspicious star broke through the gloom, it dissipated the anxiety of his mind, and cleared up his dubious passage. He re-assumed, with alacrity, the management of the helm; and was able to shape his course, with some tolerable degree of satisfaction and certainty.

Such, only much clearer in its light, and much surer in its direction, is the *holy word* of GOD, to those myriads of intellectual beings, who are bound for the eternal shores; who, embarked in a vessel of feeble flesh, are to pass the waves of this tempestuous and perilous world. In all *diffi-*

culties, those sacred pages shed an encouraging ray; in all *uncertainties*, they suggest the right determination, and point out the proper procedure. What is still a more inestimable advantage, they, like the star which conducted the eastern sages, make plain the way of access to a *Redeemer*. They display his unspeakable merits; they discover the method of being interested in his great atonement; and lead the weary soul, tossed by troubles, and shattered by temptations, to that only harbour of peaceful repose.—Let us, therefore, attend to this *unerring* directory, with the same constancy of regard, as the seafaring man observes his compass. Let us become as thoroughly acquainted with this sacred chart, as the pilot is with every trusty mark, that gives notice of a lurking rock; and with every open road, that yields a safe passage into the port. Above all, let us commit ourselves to this infallible guidance, with the same implicit resignation; let us conform our conduct to its exalted precepts, with the same sedulous care, as the children of *Israel*, when sojourning in the trackless desert, followed the pillar of fire, and the motions of the miraculous cloud.—So will it introduce us, not into an earthly *Canaan*, flowing with milk and honey; but into an *immortal* paradise, where is the fulness of joy, and where are pleasures for evermore. It will introduce us into those happy, happy regions, where our sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw itself; for the *LORD* shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning,

together with the fatigues of our pilgrimage, *shall be ended* *.

I PERCEIVE a great *variety* in the size and splendour of those gems of heaven. Some are of the first magnitude; others of an inferior order. Some *glow* with intense flames; others *glimmer* with fainter beams. Yet *all* are beautiful; all have their peculiar lustre, and distinct use; all tend, in their different degrees, to enamel the cope of heaven, and embroider the robe of Night.—This circumstance is remarked by an author, whose sentiments are a source of wisdom, and the very standard of truth. “One
“star,” says the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, “*dis-*
“*fereth* from another star in glory: so also is
“the resurrection of the dead.”

In the world above, are various *degrees* of happiness, various seats of honour. Some will rise to more illustrious distinctions, and richer joys †. Some, like vessels of ample capacity, will admit more copious accessions of light and excellence. Yet there will be no want, no deficiency, in any; but a fulness both of divine satisfactions, and personal perfections. *Each* will enjoy *all* the good, and be adorned with *all* the glory, that his heart can wish, or his condition receive.—None will know what it is to envy. Not the least malevolence, nor the least selfish-

* *Isa.* lx. 10.

† *1 Cor.* xv. 41, 42. The great Mr. Mede prefers the sense here given; and the learned Dr. Hammond admits it into his Paraphrase: whose joint authority, though far from excluding any other, is yet a sufficient warrant for this application of the words.

ness, but everlasting friendship prevails, and a mutual complacency in each other's delight. Love, cordial love, will give every particular saint a participation of all the fruitions* which are diffused through the whole assembly of the blessed.—No one *eclipses*, but each *reflects light* upon his brother. A sweet interchange of rays subsists; all enlightened by the great Fountain, and all enlightening one another. By which reciprocal communication of pleasure and amity, each will be continually *receiving from*, each incessantly *adding to*, the general felicity.

Happy, supremely happy they, who are admitted into the celestial mansions. Better to be a door keeper in those “ivory palaces †,” than to fill the most gorgeous throne on earth. The very lowest place at God's right hand is distinguished honour, and consummate bliss.—O! that we may, in some measure, anticipate that beatific state, while we remain in our banishment below! May we, *by rejoicing* in the superior prosperity of another, make it *our own!* and, provided the general result is harmony, be content, be pleased, with whatsoever part is assigned to our share in the universal choir of affairs.

WHILE I am considering the heavenly bodies, I must not entirely forget those fundamental laws of our modern astronomy, *projection* and *attraction*. One of which is the all-combining

* “Tolle invidiam, et tuum est quod habeo: tolle invidiam, et meum est quod habes.” AUGUSTINE.

† *Psal.* xlv. 8.

cement, the other is the ever-operative spring, of the mighty frame.—In the beginning, the all-creating FIRMAMENT impressed a proper degree of motion on each of those whirling orbs, Which, if not controlled, would have carried them on, in straight lines, and to endless lengths; till they were even lost in the abyss of space. But the *gravitating* property, being added to the *projectile* force, determined their courses to a circular form*; and obliged the reluctant rovers to perform their destined rounds.—Were either of those causes to suspend their action, all the harmoniously-moving spheres would be disconcerted; would degenerate into sluggish inactive masses; and, falling into the central fire, be burnt to ashes; or else would exorbitate into wild confusion; and each, by the rapidity of its whirl, be *dissipated* into atoms. But the impulsive and attractive energy being most nice-

* I am aware, the planetary orbits are not strictly circular, but rather *elliptical*. However, as they are but a small remove from the perfectly round figure, and partake of it incomparably more than the trajectories of the comets, I chuse to represent the thing in this view. Especially, because the notion of a circle is so much more intelligible to the generality of readers than that of an *ellipsis*; and because I laid it down for a rule, not to admit any such *abstruse* sentiment or *difficult* expression, as should demand a painful attention, instead of raising an agreeable idea. For which reason, I have avoided *technical* terms; have taken no notice of Jupiter's satellites, or Saturn's ring; have not so much as mentioned the names of the planets, nor attempted to wade into any depths of the science; lest, to those who have no opportunity of using the telescope, or of acquainting themselves with a system of astronomy, I should propound riddles, rather than display *entertaining* and *edifying* truths.

ly attempered to each other; and, under the immediate operation of the Almighty, exerting themselves in perpetual concert; the various globes run their radiant races, without the least interruption, or the least deviation; so as to create the alternate changes of *day* and *night*, and distribute the useful vicissitudes of *succeeding seasons*; so as to answer all the great ends of a gracious Providence, and procure every comfortable convenience for universal nature.

Does not this constitution of the material, very naturally lead the thoughts to those grand principles of the moral and devotional, world, *faith* and *love*?—These are often celebrated by the inspired Apostle, as a comprehensive summary of the gospel*. These inspire the breast, and regulate the progress, of each private Christian. These unite the whole congregation of the faithful to GOD, and one another: to GOD, the great centre, in the bonds of gratitude and devotion; to one another, by a reciprocal intercourse of brotherly affections, and friendly offices.—If you ask, Why is it impossible for the true believer to live at all adventures? to *stagnate* in sloth, or habitually to *deviate* from duty?—We answer, It is owing to his “faith working by love†.” He assuredly trusts, that CHRIST has sustained the infamy, and endured the torment, due to his sins. He firmly relies on that divine propitiation, for the pardon of all his guilt; and humbly expects everlasting salvation,

* Col. i. 4. Philem. v. 5.

† Gal. v. 6.

as the purchase of his Saviour's merits. This produces such a spirit of gratitude, as refines his inclinations, and animates his whole behaviour. He cannot, he cannot run to excess of riot; because love to his adorable Redeemer, like a strong, but filken *curb*, sweetly restrains him. He cannot, he cannot lie lulled in a lethargic indolence, because love to the same infinite Benefactor, like a pungent, but endearing, *spur*, pleasingly excites him.—In a word, faith supplies the powerful impulse, while love gives the determining bias; and leads the willing feet, through the whole circle of GOD's commandments. By the united efficacy of these *heavenly graces*, the Christian conduct is preserved, in the uniformity and beauty of holiness; as, by the blended power of those *Newtonian principles*, the solar system revolves, in a steady and magnificent regularity.

How admirable, how extensive, how diversified, is the force of this single principle, *attraction* *!—This penetrates the very essence of all bodies, and diffuses itself to the remotest limits of the mundane system.—By this, the worlds impressed with motion, hang *self-balanced* on their centres †; and, though orbs of immense magnitude require nothing but this amazing property for their support.—To this we ascribe a phænomenon, of a very different kind, the *pressure* of the atmosphere; which, though a yielding and expansive fluid, yet con-

* I mean the attraction both of *gravitation* and *cohesion*.

† “*Ponderibus librata suis.*”

OVID.

stipated by an attractive energy, surrounds the whole globe, and incloses every creature, as it were, with a tight bandage. An expedient this, absolutely necessary to preserve the texture of our bodies ; and indeed to maintain every species of animal existence.—Attraction ! Urged by this wonderful *impetus*, the *rivers* circulate, copious and unintermitted, among all the nations of the earth ; sweeping with rapidity down the steeps, or softly ebbing through the plains. Impelled by the same mysterious force, the *nutritious juices* are detached from the soil ; and, ascending the trees, find their way through millions of the finest meanders, in order to transfuse vegetative life into all the branches. — This confines the *ocean* within proper bounds. Though the waves thereof roar ; though they toss themselves, with all the madness of indignant rage ; yet, checked by this potent, this inevitable curb, they are unable to pass even the slight barrier of sand. To this the mountains owe that unshaken firmness, which laughs at the shock of careering winds ; and bids the tempest with all its mingled horrors, impotently rave. By virtue of this invisible mechanism, without the aid of crane or pulley, or any instrument of human device, many thousand tuns of water are *raised*, every moment, into the regions of the firmament. By this, they continue *suspended* in thin air, without any capacious cistern to contain their substance, or any massy pillars to sustain their weight. By this same variously-acting power, they return to the place of their

native residence ; *distilled* in gentle falls of dew, or *precipitated* in impetuous showers of rain. They *slide* into the fields in fleecy flights of snow, or are *darted* upon the houses in clattering storms of hail. This occasions the strong *cohesion* of solid bodies. Without which, our large machines could exert themselves with no vigour ; and the nicer utensils of life would elude our expectations of service. This affords a foundation for all those delicate or noble mechanic arts, which furnish mankind with numberless conveniencies, both of ornament and delight.—In short, this is the prodigious *ballast*, which composes the equilibrium, and constitutes the stability, of things ; this is the great *chain*, which forms the connexions of universal Nature ; and the mighty *engine*, which prompts, facilitates, and, in good measure, accomplishes, all her operations. What *complicated* effects from a *single cause* * ! What profusion amidst frugality ! An unknown profusion of benefits, with the utmost frugality of expense.

And what is this attraction ? Is it a quality, in its existence, inseparable from matter ; and, in its acting, independent on the DEITY ?—Quite the reverse. It is the very *finger* of God ; the constant impression of Divine power ; a principle, neither innate in matter, nor intelligible by mortals.—Does it not, however, bear a considerable analogy to the *agency* of the

* See another remarkable instance of this kind in the *Reflections on a Flower-Garden*, p. 197, 198,—together with a fine observation, quoted in the corresponding note.

HOLY GHOST, in the Christian œconomy ? Are not the gracious operations of the blessed Spirit, thus *extensive*, thus *admirable*, thus *various* ?—That almighty Being transmits his gifts through every age, and communicates his graces to every adherent on the Redeemer. All, either of illustrious memory, or of beneficial tendency ; in a word, “ all the good that is done upon earth, he doeth it himself.” Strong in *his* aid, and in the power of *his* might, the saints of all times have trod vice under their feet ; have triumphed over this abject world ; and conversed in heaven while they dwelt on earth. *Not I, but the grace of GOD which was with me**, is the unanimous acknowledgment of them all.—By the same kindly succours, the whole church is still enlightened, quickened, and governed. Through his benign influences, the scales of *ignorance* fall from the understanding ; the leprosy of *evil* concupiscence is purged from the will ; and the fetters, the more than adamantine fetters, of *habitual* iniquity, drop off from the conversation. He breathes even upon dry bones †, and they live : they are animated with faith ; they pant with ardent and heavenly desire ; they exercise themselves in all the duties of godliness.—His real, though secret, inspiration, dissolves the flint in the impenitent breast, and binds up the sorrows of the broken heart ; raises the thoughts high, in the elevations of holy hope ;

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

† See that beautiful piece of sacred and allegorical imagery displayed, *Ezek. xxxviii.*

yet lays them low in the humiliations of inward abasement; *steels* the soul with impenetrable resolution, and persevering fortitude; at the same time, *softens* it into a dove-like meekness, and *melts* it in penitential sorrow.

WHEN I contemplate those ample and magnificent structures, erected over all the æthereal plains:—when I look upon them as so many splendid repositories of light, or fruitful abodes of life:—when I remember, that there may be other orbs, vastly more remote than those which appear to our unaided sights; orbs, whose effulgence, though travelling ever since the creation, is not yet arrived upon our coasts*:—when I stretch my thoughts to the innumerable orders of beings which inhabit all those spacious systems; from the *loftiest seraph*, to the lowest reptile; from the armies of angels, which

* If this conjecture (which has no less a person than the celebrated Mr. *Huygens* for its author) concerning *unseen stars*, be true;—if, to this observation, be added, what is affirmed by our skilful astronomers, that the motion of the rays of light is so *surprisingly swift*, as to pass through ten millions of miles in a single minute:—how vast! beyond imagination vast and unmeasurable, are the spaces of the universe!—While the mind is distended with the *grand idea*; or rather, while she is dispatching her ablest powers of piercing judgment, and excursive fancy; and finds them all *drop short*; all baffled by the amazing subject; permit me to apply that spirited exclamation, and noble remark—

—“ Say, proud arch,
“ Built with divine ambition; in disdain
“ Of limit built; built in the taste of heaven!
“ Vast concave! ample-dome! wast thou design’d
“ A *meet* apartment for the DEITY?
“ Not so: that thought alone thy state impairs:
“ Thy *lofty* sinks; and shallows thy *profound*;
“ And straitens thy *diffusive*.—”

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surround the throne of JEHOVAH, to the *puny* nations, which tinge with blue the surface of the plum *, or mantle the standing pool with green :—how various appear the links in this immense chain ! how vast the gradations in this universal scale of existence ! Yet all these, though ever so vast and various, are the *work* of GOD's hand, and are full of his presence.

He rounded in his palm those dreadfully-large globes, which are pendulous in the vault of heaven. He kindled those astonishingly bright fires, which fill the firmament with a flood of glory. By him they are suspended in *fluid æther*, and cannot be shaken : by him they dispense a *perpetual* tide of beams, and are never exhausted.—He formed, with inexpressible nicety, that delicately fine collection of tubes ; that unknown multiplicity of subtile springs, which organize and actuate the frame of the minutest insect. He bids the crimson current roll ; the vital movements play ; and associates a world of wonders, even in an *animated point* †.

- * Ev'n the *blew down* the purple plum surrounds
A *living world*, thy failing sight confounds.
To HIM a peopled habitation shews,
Where millions taste the bounty GOD bestows.

See a beautiful and instructive poem, styled—DEITY.

† There are living creatures abundantly smaller than the mite. Mr. *Bradley*, in his *Treatise on Gardening*, mentions an insect, which, after accurate examination, he found to be a thousand times *less* than the *last* visible grain of sand. yet such an insect, though quite imperceptible to the naked eye, is an elephant, is a whale, compared with other animalcules almost infinitely more minute, discovered by Mr. *Lewenhoeck*.—If we consider the several limbs which com-

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—In all these is a signal exhibition of creating power; to all these are extended the special regards of preserving goodness. From hence let me learn to rely on the providence, and to revere the presence, of the Supreme Majesty.

To *rely* on his *providence*.—For, amidst that inconceivable number and variety of beings, which swarm through the regions of creation, not one is overlooked, not one is neglected, by the great omnipotent Cause of all. However inconsiderable in its character, or diminutive in its size, it is still the production of the universal Maker, and belongs to the family of the almighty Father? — What though enthroned archangels enjoy the *smiles* of his *countenance*! yet the low inhabitants of the earth, the most despicable worms of the ground, are not excluded from his *providential care*. Though the manifestation of his perfections is vouchsafed to holy and intellectual essences; his ear is open to the cries of the young raven, his eye is attentive to the wants, and to the welfare, of the very meanest births of Nature. — How much less, then, are his own people disregarded? those, for

pose such an organized particle; the different muscles which actuate such a set of limbs; the flow of spirits, incomparably more attenuated, which put those muscles in motion; the various fluids which circulate; the different secretions which are performed; together with the peculiar minuteness of the solids, before they arrive at their full growth; not to mention other *more astonishing* modes of diminution: —sure, we shall have the utmost reason to acknowledge, that the adored Maker is—MAXIMUS IN MINIMIS; *greatly glorious* even in his *smallest* works.

whom he has delivered his beloved Son to death, and for whom he has prepared habitations of eternal joy. *They* disregarded! No. *THEY* are "kept as the apple of an eye." The very hairs of their head are all numbered. The fondest mother may *forget* the infant that is "dandled upon her knees," and sucks at her breast*, much sooner than the Father of ever-

* Isa. xlix. 15. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee.*—How delicate and expressive are the images in this charming scripture! How full of *beauty*, if beheld in a critical, how rich with *consolation*, if considered in a believing, view!—Can a *woman*! one of the softer sex; whose nature is most impressible, and whose passions are remarkably tender;—can such a one, not barely disregard, but entirely *forget*; not suspend her care for a while, but utterly erase the very memory—of her *child*; her own child, not another's; a child that was formed in her *womb*, and is a part of herself?—her *son*; the more important, and, therefore more desirable species; to whom it peculiarly belongs to preserve the name, and build up the family:—her *only* son; for the word is singular, and refers to a case, where the offspring, not being numerous, but centered in a single birth, must be productive of the fondest endearment:—Can she divest herself of all her concern for such a child; not when he is grown up to maturity, or gone abroad from her house; but while he continues in an infantile state, and must owe his whole safety to her kind attendance; while he lies in her bosom, rests on her arm, and even *sucks* at her breast?—Especially if the poor innocent be racked with pain, or seized by some severe affliction; and so become an object of *compassion*, as well as of love. Can she hear its piercing cries; can she see it all restless, all helpless, under its misery; and feel no emotions of parental pity!—If *one* such monster of inhumanity might be found; could *all* (here the Prophet, to give his comparison the utmost energy, changes the singular number into the plural. It is not *אחד*, or *אחת*, but *אלה*, *כס*) could *all*

lasting compassions can *discontinue* or *remit*, his watchful tenderness to his people—his children—his heirs.

Let this teach me also a more lively sense of the *divine presence*.—All the rolling worlds above, all the living atoms below, together with all the beings that intervene betwixt these wide extremes, are vouchers for an ever-present Deity. "God has not left himself without witness." The marks of his footsteps are evident in every place, and the touches of his finger distinguishable in every creature. "*Thy name is so nigh, O thou all-supporting, all-informing LORD; and that do thy wondrous works declare*." Thy goodness warms in the morning sun, and refreshes in the evening breeze. Thy glory shines in the lamps of midnight, and smiles in the blossoms of spring. "We see a trace of thy incomprehensible grandeur in the *boundless* extent of things; and a *sketch* of thy exquisite skill, in those almost *evanescent* sparks of life, the insect race."—How stupid is this heart of mine, that, amidst such a multitude of remembrancers, thronging on every side, I should forget thee a single moment! Grant me, thou great I AM; thou source and support of universal existence;—

mothers be so degenerate? This, sure, cannot be suspected, need not be feared. Much less need the true believer be apprehensive of the failure of my kindness. An *universal* extinction of those *strongest* affections of nature, is a more supposable case, than that I should ever be unmindful of my people, or regardless of their interests.

* *Psal.* lxxv. 2.

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O grant me, an enlightened eye, to *discern* thee in every object; and a devout heart, to *adore* thee on every occasion. Instead of living without GOD in the world, may I be ever with him, and see all things full of him!

— The glitt'ring stars,
By the deep ear of Meditation heard,
Still in their midnight-watches sing of HIM.
He nods a calm. The tempest blows his wrath.
The thunder is his voice; and the red flash
His speedy sword of justice. At his touch
'The mountains flame. He shakes the solid earth,
And rocks the nations. Nor in these alone,
In ev'ry common instance GOD is seen.

THOMSON'S *Spring*:

IF the beautiful spangles which a clear night pours on the beholder's eye; if those other fires which beam, in remoter skies, and are discoverable only by that revelation to the sight, the telescope; if all those *bright millions* are so many fountains of day, enriched with native and independent lustre, illuminating planets, and enlivening systems of their own*: what pomp, how majestic and splendid, is disclosed in the midnight scene! What *riches* are disseminated through all those numberless provinces of the great JEHOVAH's empire!—Grandeur beyond expression!—Yet there is not the meanest slave, but carries *greater* wealth in

- * Consult with Reason, Reason will reply,
Each *lucid point*, which glows in yonder sky,
Informs a *system* in the boundless space,
And fills, with glory, its appointed place:
With beams unborrow'd brightens other skies;
And worlds, to thee unknown, with heat and life
supplies.

The UNIVERSE.

his own bosom, possesses *superior* dignity in his own person. The *soul*, that informs his clay; —the soul, that teaches him to think, and enables him to chuse; that qualifies him to relish rational pleasure, and to breathe sublime desire *; —the soul, that is endowed with such noble faculties, and, above all, is distinguished with the *dreadful*, the *glorious* capacity, of being pained, or blessed, for ever; —this soul surpasses in worth whatever the eye can see; whatever of material the fancy can imagine. Before one such intellectual being, all the treasure and all the magnificence of unintelligent creation becomes poor and contemptible †. For this soul, Omnipotence itself has waked, and worked, through every age. To *convince* this soul, the fundamental laws of Nature have been controlled; and the most amazing miracles have alarmed all the ends of the earth. To *instruct* this soul, the wisdom of Heaven has been transfused into the sacred page; and missionaries have been sent from the great King, who resides in

* In *this* respect, as vested with such capacities, the soul even of fallen man has an unquestionable greatness and dignity; is *majestic*, though in ruin.

† I beg leave to transcribe a pertinent passage from that celebrated master of reason, and universal literature, Dr. Bently; whom no one can be tempted to suspect either tainted with enthusiasm, or warped to bigotry. —“ If we consider,” says he, “ the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scale against brute and inanimate matter, we may affirm, without over-valuing human nature, that the soul of one virtuous and religious man is of greater worth and excellency than the sun, and his planets, and all the stars in the world.” See his *Sermons at Boyle’s Lectures*, N^o 8.

light unapproachable. To *sanctify* this soul, the almighty Comforter takes the wings of a dove; and, with a sweet transforming influence, broods on the human heart. And, O! to *redeem* this soul from guilt, to rescue it from hell, the heaven of heavens was bowed, and God himself came down to dwell in dust.

Let me pause a while upon this important subject.—What are the schemes which engage the attention of eminent statesmen, and mighty monarchs, compared with the grand interests of an immortal soul? The support of commerce, and the success of armies, though extremely weighty affairs; yet, if laid in the balance against the salvation of a soul, are lighter than the downy feather poised against talents of gold. To save a navy from *shipwreck*, or a kingdom from *slavery*, are deliverances of the most momentous nature, which the transactions of mortality can admit. But, O! how they shrink into an inconsiderable trifle, if (their aspect upon immortality forgot) they are set in competition with the delivery of a single soul from the anguish and horrors of a *distressed eternity* *!

Is such the importance of the soul! what vigilance then can be *too much*, or rather, what holy solicitude can be *sufficient*, for the overseers of the Saviour's flock, and the guardians of this great, this venerable, this invaluable, charge?—Since such is the importance of the soul, wilt thou

- * Not all yon luminaries quench'd at once
Were half so sad, as one benighted mind,
Which gropes for happiness, and meets despair.

Night-Thoughts, N° IX.

not, O man, be watchful for the preservation of thy own? Shall every casual incident awaken thy concern; every transitory toy command thy regard? and shall the welfare of thy soul, a work of continual occurrence, a work of endless consequence, sue, in vain, for thy serious care? Thy soul, thy soul is thy all. If this be *secured*, thou art greatly rich, and wilt be unspeakably happy. If this be *lost*, a whole world acquired will leave thee in poverty; and all its delights enjoyed will abandon thee to misery.

I HAVE often been charmed, and awed, at the sight of the nocturnal heavens, even before I knew how to consider them in their proper circumstances of majesty and beauty. *Something*, like *magic*, has struck my mind, on a transient and unthiſking survey of the æthereal vault, tinged throughout with the purest azure, and decorated with innumerable starry lamps. I have felt, I know not what, powerful and aggrandizing impulse; which seemed to snatch me from the low intanglements of vanity, and prompted an ardent sigh for *sublimer objects*. Methought I heard, even from the silent spheres, a commanding call, to spurn the abject earth, and pant after unseen delights.—Henceforward, I hope to imbibe more copiously this *moral emanation* of the skies, when, in some such manner as the preceding, they are rationally seen, and the sight is duly improved. The stars, I trust, will *teach* as well as *shine*; and help to dispel, both Nature's gloom and my intellectual darkness. To some people, they discharge no better a service than that of

holding a flambeau to their feet, and softening the horrors of their night. To me, and my friends, may they act as ministers of a superior order, as counsellors of wisdom, and guides to happiness! Nor will they fail to execute this nobler office, if they gently light our way into the knowledge of their adored Maker; if they point out, with their silver rays, our path to his beatific presence.

I gaze, I ponder. I ponder, I gaze; and think ineffable things.—I roll an eye of awe and admiration. Again and again I repeat my ravished views; and can never satiate either my curiosity or inquiry. I spring my thoughts into this immense field, till even Fancy tires upon her wing. I find wonders *ever new*; wonders more and *more amazing*.—Yet, after all my present inquiries, what a mere *nothing* do I know; by all my future searches, how *little* shall I be able to learn, of those vastly distant suns, and their circling retinue of worlds! Could I pry with *Newton's* piercing sagacity, or launch into his extensive surveys; even then my apprehensions would be little better than those dim and scanty images, which the *mole*, just emerged from her cavern, receives on her feeble optic.—This, sure, should repress all impatient or immoderate ardour to pry into the secrets of the starry structures, and make me more particularly carefully to cultivate my heart. To fathom the depths of the Divine essence, or to scan universal Nature with a critical exactness, is an attempt which sets the *acuteest philosopher* very nearly on a level with the

idiot ; since it is almost, if not altogether, as impracticable by the former as by the latter.

Be it, then, my chief study, not to pursue what is absolutely unattainable ; but rather to seek what is obvious to find, easy to be acquired, and of inestimable advantage when possessed. O ! let me seek *that charity* which edifieth *, *that faith*, which purifieth. Love, humble love, not conceited science, keeps the door of heaven. Faith, a child-like faith, in JESUS ; not the haughty self-sufficient spirit, which scorns to be ignorant of any thing ; presents a key † to those abodes of bliss.

This present state is the scene destined to the *exercise of devotion* ; the invisible world is the place appointed for the *enjoyment of knowledge*. There the dawn of our infantile minds will be advanced to the maturity of perfect day ; or rather, there our midnight-shades will be brightened into all the lustre of noon. There the souls

* 1 Cor. viii. 1. I need not inform my reader, that in this text, in that admirable chapter, 1 Cor. xiii. and in various other passages of Scripture, the word *charity* should by no means be confined to the particular act of *almsgiving*, or external beneficence. It is of a much more exalted and extensive nature. It signifies that divinely-precious grace, which warms the soul with *supreme love* to GOD, and enlarges it with *disinterested affection* for men. Which renders it the reigning care of the life, and chief delight of the heart, to promote the happiness of the one, and the glory of the other.—*This, this*, is that charity of which so many excellent things are every where spoken ; which can never be too highly extolled, or too earnestly coveted, since it is the image of GOD, and the very spirit of heaven.

† The righteousness of CHRIST. This is what Milton beautifully styles,

———“ The golden key,
“ That opes the palace of Eternity.”

which come from the school of faith, and bring with them the principles of love, will dwell in light itself; will be obscured with no darkness at all; will know, even as they are known*.—Such an acquaintance therefore do I desire to form, and to carry on such a correspondence with the heavenly bodies, as may shed a benign influence on the seeds of grace implanted in my breast. Let the exalted tracts of the firmament sink my soul into *deep humiliation*. Let those eternal fires kindle in my heart an *adoring gratitude* to their almighty Sovereign. Let yonder ponderous and enormous globes, which rest on his supporting arm, teach me an *unshaken assisance* in their incarnate Maker. Then shall I be—if not wise as the astronomical adept, yet WISE UNTO SALVATION.

HAVING now walked and worshipped in this *universal temple*, that is arched with skies, emblazed with stars, and extended even to immensity:—having cast an eye, like the enraptured patriarch †; an eye of *reason* and *devotion*, through the magnificent scene; with the former, having discovered an infinitude of worlds; and with the latter, having met the Deity in every view; having beheld, as *Moses* in the flaming bush, a *glimpse* of JEHOVAH's excellencies! reflected from the several planets, and streaming from myriads of celestial luminaries:—having read various lessons in that stupendous *book of wisdom* ‡,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

† Gen. xv. 5.

‡ ————— For heaven

Is as the *book of God* before thee set,
Wherein to read his wondrous works.—

MILT.

where unmeasurable sheets of azure compose the page; and orbs of radiance write, in everlasting characters, a *comment* on our creed:— what remains, but that I close the midnight solemnity, as our LORD concluded his grand sacramental institution, with a *song of praise*?— And behold a hymn, suited to the sublime occasion, indited by Inspiration itself*, transferred into our language†, by one of the happiest efforts of human ingenuity.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue æthereal sky,
And spangled heav'ns, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim:
Th' unwearied Sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's pow'r display;
And publishes to ev'ry land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening-shades prevail,
The Moon takes up the wondrous tale;
And, nightly, to the list'ning Earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though, in solemn silence, all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amid their radant orbs be found?
In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing, as they shine,
“ The hand that made us is divine.”

* *Psal. xix.*

† ADDISON, *Spect.* Vol. VI. N^o 465.

A

WINTER-PIECE.

Storms and Tempests may *calm* the soul—Snow and Ice be taught to *warm* the heart, and praise the Creator.

Anonym. Letter to the Author. See note on p. 214.

TIS true, in the delightful seasons, HIS tenderness and HIS love are most eminently displayed.—In the *vernal* months, all is beauty to the eye, and music to the ear. The clouds drop fatness; the air softens into balm; and flowers in rich abundance spring wherever we tread, bloom wherever we look.—Amidst the burning heats of *summer*, HE expands the leaves, and thickens the shades. He spreads the cooling arbour to receive us, and awakes the gentle breeze to fan us. The moss swells into a couch, for the repose of our bodies; while the rivulet softly rolls, and sweetly murmurs, to sooth our imagination.—In *autumn*, HIS bounty covers the fields with a profusion of nutrimental treasure, and bends the boughs with loads of delicious fruit. He furnishes his hospitable board with present plenty, and prepares a copious magazine for future wants.—But is it *only* in these smiling periods of the

year, that GOD, the all-gracious GOD, is seen? Has *winter*, stern winter, no tokens of his presence? Yes: all things are eloquent of his praise. "His way is in the whirlwind." Storms and tempests fulfil his word, and extol his power. Even piercing frosts bear witness to his goodness, while they bid the shivering nations tremble at his wrath.—Be Winter then, for a while, our theme *. Perhaps, those *barren* scenes may be *fruitful* of intellectual improvement. Perhaps, that rigorous cold, which binds the earth in icy chains, may serve to enlarge our hearts, and warm them with holy love.

SEE! how the *day* is *shortened*?—The sun, detained in fairer climes, or engaged in more agreeable services, rises, like an unwilling visitant, with tardy and reluctant steps. He walks, with a shy indifference, along the edges of the southern sky; casting an oblique glance, he just looks upon our dejected world; and scarcely scatters light through the thick air. Dim is his appearance, languid are his gleams, while he continues. Or, if he chance to wear a brighter aspect, and a cloudless brow; yet, like the

* A sketch of this nature, I must acknowledge, is quite different from the subject of the book; and, I cannot but declare, was as far distant from the thoughts of the Author. But the desire of *several* acquaintance, together with an intimation of its usefulness, by a very *polite* letter from an *unknown* hand, (which has *undesignedly* furnished me with the best motto I could recollect), prevailed with me to add a few descriptive touches, and improving hints, on what is so often experienced in these northern regions. I hope, the attempt I have made to oblige these gentlemen, will obtain the *approbation*, or, at least, the *excuse*, of my other readers.

young and gay in the house of mourning, he seems uneasy till he is gone, is in haste to depart. —And let him depart. Why should we wish for his longer stay, since he can shew us nothing but the creation in distress? The flowery families lie dead, and the tuneful tribes are struck dumb. The trees, stript of their verdure, and lashed by storms, spread their naked arms to the enraged and relentless heavens. Fragrance no longer floats in the air; but chilling damps hover, or cutting gales blow. Nature, divested of all her beautiful robes, sits, like a forlorn disconsolate widow, in her weeds. While winds, in doleful accents, howl; and rains, in repeated showers, weep.

We regret not, therefore, the speedy departure of the day. When the room is hung with *funeral black*, and dismal objects are all around, who would desire to have the *glimmering taper* kept alive? which can only discover spectacles of sorrow, can only make the horror visible. —And, since this mortal life is little better than a continual conflict with sin, or an unremitted struggle with misery; is it not a *gracious* ordination, which has reduced our age to a *span*? Four score years of trial, for the virtuous, are sufficiently long; and more than such a term, allowed to the wicked, would render them beyond all measure vile. Our way to the kingdom of heaven lies through tribulations. Shall we then *accuse*, shall we not rather *blest*, the Providence, which has made the passage short? Soon, soon we cross the vale of tears; and

then arrive on the happy hills, where light for ever shines, where joy for ever smiles. -

SOMETIMES the day is rendered shorter still ; is almost blotted out from the year *. The vapours gather ; they thicken into an impenetrable gloom, and obscure the face of the sky. At length, the *rains* descend. The sluices of the firmament are opened ; and the low-hung clouds pour their congregated stores. Copious and unintermitted, still they pour, and still are unexhausted. The waters drop incessantly from the eaves, and rush in rapid streams from the spouts. They roar along the channelled pavements, and stand in foul shallows amidst the village-streets. Now, if the inattentive eye, or negligent hand, has left the roof but scantily covered ; the insinuating element finds its way into every flaw, and oozing through the ceiling, at once upbraids and chastises the careless inhabitant. The ploughman, soaked to the skin, leaves his half-tilled acre. The poor poultry, dripping with wet, crowd into shelter. The tenants of the bough fold up their wings, afraid to launch into the streaming air. The beasts, joyless and dispirited, ruminate under their sheds. The roads swim, and the brooks swell. — The *river*, amidst all this watery ferment, long contained itself within its appointed bounds: but, swollen by innumerable currents, and roused at last into uncontrollable rage, bursts over its banks, shoots into the plain, bears down all op-

* “ *Involvere diem nimbi, et nox humida cœlum*

“ *Abstulit.*” —

VIRG.

position, spreads itself far and wide, and buries the meadow under a brown, sluggish, soaking deluge.

How happy for man, that this inundation comes when there are no flowery crops in the valley to be overwhelmed; no fields standing thick with corn to be laid waste! At *such* a juncture, it would have been *ruin* to the husbandman and his family: but, *thus* timed, it yields *manure* for his ground, and promises him *riches* in reversion.—How often, and how long, has the divine Majesty bore with the most injurious affronts from sinners! His goodness triumphed over their perverseness, and graciously refused to be exasperated. But, O presumptuous creatures, multiply no longer your provocations. Urge not, by repeated iniquities, the almighty arm to strike; lest his long-suffering cease, and his fierce anger break forth; break forth like a *flood of waters**, and sweep you away into irrecoverable and everlasting perdition.

HOW mighty! how majestic! and, O how mysterious are thy works, thou GOD of heaven, and LORD of nature! When the air is calm, where sleep the *stormy winds*? In what chambers are they reposed, or in what dungeons confined! till thou art pleased to awaken their rage, and throw open their prison doors. Then, with irresistible impetuosity they fly forth, scattering dread, and menacing destruction.

The atmosphere is hurled into the most tu-

* *Hof. v. 10.*

multuous confusion. The aerial torrent bursts its way over mountains, seas, and continents. All things feel the dreadful shock; all things tremble before the furious blast. The *forest*, vexed and tore, groans under the scourge. Her sturdy sons are strained to the very root, and almost sweep the soil they were wont to shade. The stubborn oak, that disdains to bend, is dashed headlong to the ground; and, with shattered arms, with prostrate trunk, blocks the road.—While the flexile reed, that springs up in the marsh, yielding to the gulf, (as the *meek* and pliant temper to injuries, or the *resigned* and patient spirit to misfortunes), eludes the force of the storm, and survives amidst the wide spread havoc.

For a moment the turbulent and outrageous sky seems to be assuaged; but it intermits its wrath only to increase its strength. Soon the sounding squadrons of the air return to the attack, and renew their ravages with redoubled fury. The stately dome rocks amidst the wheeling clouds. The impregnable tower totters on its basis, and threatens to overwhelm whom it was intended to protect. The ragged rock is rent in pieces*; and even the hills, the perpetual hills, on their deep foundations, are scarcely secure.—Where now is the place of safety? when the *city* reels, and houses become heaps! Sleep affrighted flies. Diversion is turned into horror. All is uproar in the element; all is consternation among mortals; and nothing but

* 1 Kings xix. 11.

one wide scene of rueful devastation, through the land.—Yet this is only an *inferior* minister of divine displeasure; the executioner of *milder* indignation. How then,—O! *how will the lofty looks of man be humbled, and the haughtiness of man be bowed down**, when the LORD GOD Omnipotent shall *meditate* terror,—when he shall set *all* his terrors in array,—when he rises to judge the nations, and to *shake terribly* the earth?

The *ocean* swells with tremendous commotions. The ponderous waves are heaved from their capacious bed, and almost lay bare the unfathomable deep. Flung into the most rapid agitation, they sweep over the rocks; they lash the lofty cliffs; and toss themselves into the clouds. Navies are rent from their anchors; and, with all their enormous load, are whirled, swift as the arrow, wild as the winds, along the vast abyss.—Now they climb the rolling mountain; they plough the frightful ridge; and seem

* ——— “*Mortalia corda,*

“*Peregentes humilis stravit pavor.*”——

One would almost imagine, that *Virgil* had read *Isaiah*, and borrowed his ideas from *ch. ii. v. 11*. The *humilis* and *stravit* of the one so exactly correspond with the—*humbled—bowed down*—of the other. But, in one circumstance, the Prophet is very much superior to the Poet. The Prophet, by giving a striking *contrast* to his sentiments, represents them with incomparably greater energy. He says not, *men* in the gross, or the *human heart* in general: but men of the most *elated* looks; hearts big with the most *arrogant* imaginations: even *these* shall stoop from their supercilious heights; even *these* shall grovel in the dust of abasement, and shudder with all the extremes of an abject pusillanimity.

to skim the skies. Anon they plunge into the opening gulf; they lose the sight of day; and are lost themselves to every eye. How vain is the pilot's art! how impotent the mariner's strength! They reel to and fro, and stagger in the jarring hold; or cling to the cordage, while bursting seas foam over the deck. *Despair* is in every face, and *Death* sits threatening on every surge.—But why, O ye astonished mariners, why should you abandon yourselves to despair? Is the LORD's hand *shortened*, because the waves of the sea rage horribly? Is his ear *deafened* by the roaring thunders, and the bellowing tempest? Cry, cry unto HIM, who “holdeth the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand.” He is all-gracious to hear, and almighty to save. If HE command, the storm shall be hushed to silence; the billows shall subside into a calm; the lightnings shall lay their fiery bolts aside; and, instead of sinking in a watery grave, you shall find yourselves brought to the desired haven.

SOMETIMES, after a joyless day, a more dismal *night* succeeds.—The lazy, louring vapours had wove so thick a veil, as the meridian sun could scarcely penetrate. What gloom then must overwhelm the nocturnal hours! The moon withdraws her shining. Not a single star is able to struggle through the deep arrangement of shades. All is *pitchy darkness*, without one enlivening ray. How solemn! how awful! 'Tis like the shroud of Nature, or the return of Chaos. I don't wonder that it is the parent

of terrors, and so apt to engender melancholy. —Lately the Tempest marked its rapid way with *mischief*; now the Night dresses her silent pavilion with *horror*.

I have *sometimes* left the beaming tapers, withdrawn from the ruddy fire, and plunged into the thickest of these sooty shades, without regretting the change; rather exulting in it as a welcome deliverance. The very gloom was pleasing, was exhilarating, compared with the conversation I quitted. The speech of my companions (how does it grieve me, that I should *even once* have occasion to call them by *that* name!) was the language of darkness; was horror to the soul, and torture to the ear*.—*Their teeth were spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword, to stab and assassinate their neighbour's character. Their throat was an open sepulchre, gaping to devour the reputation of the innocent, or tainting the air with their virulent and polluted breath.*—Sometimes, their licentious and ungovernable discourse shot arrows

- * What has been said, I ask'd my soul, what done?
How slow'd our mirth? or whence the source begun?
Perhaps the jest, that charm'd the sprightly crowd,
And made the jovial table laugh so loud,
To some *false* notion ow'd its poor pretence,
To an ambiguous word's perverted sense;
To a wild sonnet, or a wanton air,
Offence and torture to the sober ear.

Perhaps, alas! the pleasing stream was brought
From this man's error, from another's fault;
From topics which Good-nature would forget,
And *Prudence* mention with the last regret.

PRIOR'S *Sol.*

of *profaneness* against Heaven itself; and, in proud defiance, challenged the resentment of Omnipotence.—Sometimes, as if it was the glory of human nature to cherish the *grossest* appetites of the brute, or the mark of a gentleman to have served an apprenticeship in a brothel; the filthiest jests of the stews (if low *obscenity* can be a jest) were nauseously obtruded on the company. All the *modest* part were offended and grieved; while the other besotted creatures laughed aloud, though the leprosy of uncleanness appeared on their lips.—Are not these persons *prisoners of darkness*, though blazing sconces pour artificial day through their rooms? Are not their souls immured in the most baleful shades, though the noon-tide sun is brightened by flaming on their gilded chariots?—They discern not that great and adorable Being, who fills the universe with his infinite and glorious presence; who is *all eye*, to observe their actions; *all ear*, to examine their words. They know not the all-sufficient Redeemer, nor the unspeakable blessedness of his heavenly kingdom. They are groping for the prize of happiness; but will certainly grasp the thorn of anxiety. They are wantonly sporting on the brink of a precipice; and are every moment in danger of falling headlong into *irretrievable* ruin, and *endless* despair.

They have forced me out, and are, perhaps, deriding me in my absence; are charging my reverence for the ever-present GOD, and my concern for the dignity of our *rational* nature,

to the account of humour and singularity; to narrowness of thought, or sourness of temper, Be it so. I will indulge no indignation against them. If any thing like it *should* arise, I will convert it into prayer: "Pity them, O thou Father of mercies! Shew them the madness of their profaneness! Shew them the baseness of their vile ribaldry! Let their dissolute rant be turned into silent sorrow and confusion; till they open their lips, to adore thine *insulted* Majesty, and to implore thy gracious pardon. Till they devote to thy service those social hours, and those superior faculties, which they are now abusing, to the dishonour of thy name, to the contamination of their own souls, and (unless timely repentance intervene) to their everlasting infamy and perdition."

I ride home amidst the gloomy void. All darkling and solitary, I can scarce discern my horse's head; and only guess out my blind road. *No companion*, but danger; or, perhaps, "direction ready at my side*."

But, why do I fancy myself *solitary*? Is not the Father of lights, the God of my life, the great and everlasting friend, always at my right hand? Because the day is excluded, is his omnipresence vacated? Though I have no earthly acquaintance near, to assist in case of a misfortune; or to beguile the time, and divert uneasy suspicions, by entertaining conferences; may I not lay my help upon the Almighty, and con-

* Job xviii. 12.

verse with GOD by humble supplication? For this exercise no place is improper, no hour unseasonable, and no posture incommodious. This is *society*, the best of society, even in solitude. This is a fund of delights, easily portable, and quite inexhaustible. A *treasure* this of unknown value; liable to no hazard from wrong or robbery; but perfectly secure to the lonely wanderer, in the most darksome paths.

And why should I distress myself with apprehensions of *peril*? This access to GOD is not only an indefeasible privilege, but a kind of *ambulatory garrison*. Those who make known their requests unto GOD, and rely upon his protecting care; he gives *his angels* charge over their welfare. His angels are commissioned to escort them in their travelling; and to hold up their goings, that they dash not their foot against a stone*. Nay, *he himself* condescends to be their guardian, and “keeps all their bones, “so that not one of them is broken.” Between these persons, and the most mischievous objects, a treaty of peace is concluded. The articles of this grand alliance are recorded in the book of revelation; and will, when it is for the real benefit of believers, assuredly be made good, in the administrations of Providence. *In that day*, saith the LORD, *will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and they shall be in league with the stones of the field*†. Though they fall headlong

* *Psal.* xci. 11, 12. † *Job* v. 23. *Hos.* ii. 18.

on the flints; even the flints, fitted to fracture the skull, shall receive them as into the arms of friendship, and not offer to hurt whom the LORD is pleased to preserve.

May I then enjoy the presence of this gracious GOD, and darkness and light shall be both alike. Let HIM whisper peace to my conscience; and this dread silence shall be more charming than the voice of Eloquence, or the strains of Music. Let HIM reveal his ravishing perfections in my soul; and I shall not want the soft beauties of the morn, the golden glories of noon, or the impurpled evening-sky. I shall sigh only for those most desirable and distinguished realms, where the light of HIS countenance *perpetually* shines, and, consequently, "there is no night there*."

HOW surprising are the alterations of Nature! I left her, the preceding evening, plain and unadorned. But, now, a *thick rime* has shed its hoary honours over all. It has shagged the fleeces of the sheep, and crisped the traveller's locks. The hedges are richly fringed, and all the ground is profusely powdered. The downward branches are tasselled with silver, and the upright are feathered with the plumy wave.

The *fine* are not always the *valuable*. The air, amidst all these gaudy decorations, is charged with chilling and *unwholesome* damps. The raw hazy influence spreads wide; sits deep; hangs heavy and oppressive on the springs of life. A listless languor clogs the animal func-

* Rev. xxi. 25.

tions, and the purple stream glides but faintly through its channels. In vain, the ruler of the day exerts his beaming powers: in vain, he attempts to disperse this insurrection of vapours. The sullen, malignant cloud refuses to depart. It envelopes the world, and intercepts the *prospect*. I look abroad for the neighbouring village; I send my eye in quest of the rising turret; but am scarce able to discern the very next house. Where are the blue arches of heaven? Where is the radiant countenance of the sun? where the boundless scenes of creation? Lost, lost are their beauties; quenched their glories. The thronged theatre of the universe seems an empty void, and all its elegant pictures an undistinguished blank.—Thus would it have been with our intellectual views, if the *gospel* had not come in to our relief. We should have known neither our true good nor real evil. We had been a riddle to ourselves; the present state all confusion, and the future impenetrable darkness. But the Sun of Righteousness, arising with potent and triumphant beams, has dissipated the interposing cloud; has opened a prospect more beautiful than the blossoms of spring, more cheering than the treasures of autumn, and far more enlarged than the extent of the visible system: which, having led the eye of the mind through fields of grace, over rivers of righteousness, and hills crowned with knowledge, terminates, at length, in the heavens; sweetly losing itself in regions of infinite bliss, and endless glory.

As I walk along the fog, it seems, at some little distance, to be almost solid gloom; such as would shut out every glimpse of light, and totally imprison me in obscurity. But when I approach, and enter it, I find myself agreeably mistaken, and the mist much *thinner* than it *appeared*.—Such is the case with regard to the sufferings of the present life; they are not, when experienced, so dreadful as a timorous imagination surmised. Such also is the case with reference to the *gratifications* of *sense*: they prove not, when enjoyed, so substantial as a sanguine expectation represented. In both instances, we are graciously disappointed. The keen edge of the calamity is blunted, that it may not wound us with incurable anguish; the exquisite relish of the prosperity is palled, that it may not captivate our affections, and enslave them to inferior delights.

SOMETIMES the face of things wears a more pleasing form; the very reverse of the foregoing. The sober evening advances, to close the short-lived day. The firmament, clear and un sullied, puts on its brightest blue. The stars, in thronging multitudes, and with a peculiar brilliancy, glitter through the fair expanse. While the *frost* pours its subtile and penetrating influence all around. Sharp and intensely severe, all the long night, the rigid æther continues its operations. When, late and slow, the morning opens her pale eye; in what a curious and amusing disguise is Nature dressed! The icicles, jagged and uneven, are pendent on the

houses. A whitish film incrusts the windows, where mimic landscapes rise, and fancied figures swell. The fruitful fields are hardened to iron; the moistened meadows are congealed to marble; and both resound (an effect unknown before) with the peasant's hasty tread. The stream is arrested in its career, and its ever-flowing surface chained to the banks. The fluid paths become a solid road; where the finny shoals were wont to rove the sportive youth slide, or the rattling chariots roll*. And (what would seem, to an inhabitant of the southern world, as unaccountable as the deepest mysteries of our religion) that very same breath of Heaven, which *cements* the lakes into a crystal pavement, *cleaves* the oaks as it were with invisible wedges: "breaks in pieces the northern iron, "and the steel;" even while it *builds* a bridge of icy rock over the seas†.

The air is all serenity. Refined by the nitrous particles, it affords the most distinct views, and extensive prospects. The seeds of *infection* are killed; and the *pestilence* destroyed, even in embryo. So the cold of *affliction* tends to mortify our corruptions, and subdue our vi-

* "Concreſcunt ſubito currenti in flumine cruſtæ ;

"Undaque jam tergo ferratos ſuſtinet orbes,

"Puppibus illa prius patulis, nunc hoſpita plauſtris

"Æraque diſſiliunt vulgo."

VIRG.

† *Job xxxviii. 30. The waters are hid, locked up from the cattle's lips, and ſecured from the fiſher's net, as wells were wont to be cloſed with a ponderous and impenetrable ſtone. And not only lakes and rivers, but the ſurface of the great deep, with its reſtleſs and uncontrollable ſurges, is taken captive יתלכדר by the froſt, and bound in ſhining fetters.*

tious habits.—The crowding atmosphere constricts our bodies, and braces our nerves. The spirits are buoyant, and sally briskly on the execution of their office. In the summer months, such an unclouded sky, and so bright a sun, would have melted us with heat, and softened us into supineness. We should have been ready to throw our limbs under the spreading beach, and to lie at ease by the murmuring brook. But now none loiters in his path ; none is seen with folded arms. All is in motion ; all is activity. Choice, prompted by the weather, supplies the spur of necessity. Thus, the rugged school of misfortune often trains up the mind to a vigorous exertion of its faculties. The bleak climate of *adversity* often inspirits us with a manly resolution. When a soft and downy affluence, perhaps, would have relaxed all the generous spring of the soul, and have left it enervated with pleasure, or dissolved in indolence.

“*COLD* cometh out of the north*.” The winds, having swept those deserts of snow, arm themselves with millions of frozen particles, and make a fierce descent upon our isle. Under black and scowling clouds, they drive, dreadfully whizzing, through the darkened air. They growl around our houses ; assault our doors ; and, eager for entrance, fasten on our windows. Walls can scarce restrain them ; bars are unable to exclude them ; through every cranny they force their way. Ice is on their

* *Job xxxvii. 9.*

wings; they scatter agues through the land; and Winter, all Winter, rages as they go. Their breath is as a searing * iron to the little verdure left in the plains. Vastly more pernicious to the tender plants than the sharpest knife, they kill their branches, and wound the very root. Let not the corn venture to peep too freely from the entrenchment of the furrow; let not the fruit-bearing blossoms dare to come abroad from their lodgment in the bark; lest these murderous blasts intercept and seize the unwary strangers, and destroy the hopes of the advancing year.

O, 'tis severely cold! Who is so hardy, as not to shrink at this *excessively-pinching* weather? See! Every face is pale. Even the blooming cheeks contract a gelid hue, and the teeth hardly forbear chattering.—Ye that sit easy and joyous, amidst your commodious apartments, solacing yourselves in the diffusive warmth of your fire, be mindful of your brethren in the cheerless tenement of Poverty. *Their* shattered panes are open to the piercing winds; a tattered garment scarcely covers their shivering flesh; while a few faint and dying embers on the squalid hearth, rather mock their wishes, than warm their limbs.—While the generous juices

* This, I suppose, is the meaning of that figurative expression used by the prophet *Habakkuk*; who, speaking of the *Chaldeans* invading *Judea*, says,—*Their faces*, or the incursions they make, *shall sup up*, shall swallow greedily, shall devour utterly, the inhabitants of the country, and their valuable effects; *as the keen, corroding blasts of the east wind* destroy every green thing in the field. *Hab. i. 9.*

of *Oporto* sparkle in your glasses; or the streams, beautifully tinged and deliciously flavoured with the *Chinese* leaf, smoke in the elegant procelain; O remember, that many of your fellow-creatures, amidst all the rigour of these inclement skies, are emaciated with sickness, benumbed with age, and pining with hunger. Let "their loins bless you," for comfortable clothing. Restore them with medicine; regale them with food; and baffle the raging year. So, may you never know any of their distresses, but only by the hearing of the ear, the seeing of the eye, or the feeling of a tender commiseration!—Methinks, the bitter blustering winds plead for the poor indigents. May they breathe pity into your breasts, while they blow hardships into *their* huts!—Observe those blue flames, and ruddy coals, in your chimney: quickened by the cold, they look more lively, and glow more strongly. Silent, but seasonable, admonition to the gay circle, that chat and smile around them! *Thus*, may your hearts, at such a juncture of need, kindle into a peculiar benevolence! Detain not your superfluous piles of wood; let them hasten to the relief of the starving family. Bid them expire in many a willing blaze, to mitigate the severity of the season, and cheer the bleak abodes of Want. So shall they ascend, mingled with thanksgivings to God, and ardent prayers for your welfare;—ascend, more grateful to Heaven than columns of the most costly incense.

NOW the winds cease. Having brought their load, they are dismissed from service. They

wafted an immense cargo of clouds, which empty themselves in *snow*. At first, a few scattered shreds come wandering down the saddened sky. This slight skirmish is succeeded by a general onset. The flakes, large and numerous, and thick-wavering, descend. They dim the air, and hasten the approach of night. Through all the night, in softest silence, and with a continual flow, this fleecy shower falls. In the morning, when we awake, what a surprising change appears! Is this the same world? Here is no diversity of colour! I can hardly distinguish the trees from the hills on which they grow. Which are the meadows, and which the plains? Where are the green pastures, and where the fallow lands? All things lie blended in bright confusion; so bright, that it heightens the splendour of day, and even dazzles the organs of sight.—The lawn is not so fair as this snowy mantle which invests the fields; and even the lily, was the lily to appear, would look tarnished in its presence. I can think of but *one* thing, which *excels* or equals the glittering robe of Winter. Is any person desirous to know my meaning? He may find it explained in that admirable hymn*, composed by the Royal penitent. Is any desirous to possess this matchless ornament? He will find it offered to his acceptance in every page of the gospel.

See! (for the eye cannot satisfy itself with-

* Can any thing be whiter than snow! Yes, saith *David*: If GOD be pleased to wash me from my sins in the blood of CHRIST, I shall be even whiter than snow. Psal. li. 7. See page 131.

out viewing again and again the curious, the delicate scene), see ! how the hedges are habited, like spotless Vestals ! The houses are roofed with uniformity and lustre. The meadows are covered with a carpet of the finest ermine*. The groves bow beneath the lovely burden ; and all, all below, is one wide, immense, shining waste of white.—By deep snows, and heavy rains, GOD *sealeth up the hand of every man*. And for this purpose, adds our sacred philosopher, *that all men may know his work*†. He confines them within their doors, and puts a stop to their secular business ; that they may consider the things which belong to their spiritual welfare ; that, having a vacation from their ordinary employ, they may observe the works of his power, and become acquainted with the mysteries of his grace.

And worthy, worthy of all observation, are the works of the great Creator. They are prodigiously various, and perfectly amazing. How pliant and ductile is Nature under his forming hand ! At his command, the self-same substance assumes the most different shapes, and is transformed into an endless multiplicity of figures. If HE ordains, the water is *moulded* into hail, and discharged upon the earth like a volley of shot ; or it is *consolidated* into ice, and defends the rivers, “ as it were with a breast-

* This animal is milk-white. As for those *black spots*, which we generally see in linings of ermine, they are added by the furrier, in order to diversify the appearance, or heighten the beauty, of the native colour.

† Job xxxvii. 7.

"plate." At the bare intimation of his will, the very same element is scattered in hoar frost, like a sprinkling of the most *attenuated* ashes; or is spread over the surface of the ground, in these couches of swelling and *flaky* down.

The snow, however it may carry the appearance of cold, affords a *warm* garment for the corn; screens it from nipping frosts, and cherishes its infant growth. It will abide for a while, to exert a protecting care, and exercise a fostering influence. Then, touched by the sun, or thawed by a softening gale, the furry vesture melts into genial moisture; sinks deep into the soil, and saturates its pores with the dissolving nitre; replenishing the glebe with those principles of vegetative life, which will open into the bloom of spring, and ripen into the fruits of autumn.—Beautiful emblem this, and comfortable representation of the divine word, both in the successful and advantageous issue of its operation! *As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it*.*

NATURE, at length, puts off her lucid veil. She drops it in a trickling *thaw*. The loosened snow rolls in sheets from the houses. Various openings spot the hills; which, even while we

* *Isa.* lv. 10, 11.

look, become larger, and more numerous. The trees rid themselves, by degrees, of the hoary incumbrance. Shook from the springing boughs, part falls heavy to the ground, part flies abroad in shining atoms. Our fields and gardens, lately buried beneath the drifted heaps, rise plain and distinct to view.—Since we see Nature once again, has she no verdant traces, no beautiful features, left? They are, like real friends, very rare; and therefore the more particularly to be regarded, the more highly to be valued.—Here and there the *holly* hangs out her glowing berries; the *laurustinus* spreads her graceful tufts; and both under a covert of unfading foliage.—The plain, but hardy *ivy*, clothes the decrepit, crazy wall; nor shrinks from the friendly office, though the skies frown, and the storm roars.—The *laurel*, firm, erect, and bold, expands its leaf of vivid green. In spite of the united, the repeated, attacks of wind, and rain, and frost, it preserves an undismayed lively look; and maintains its post, while withering millions fall around. Worthy, by vanquishing the rugged force of Winter, worthy to adorn the triumphant conqueror's brow—Nor must I forget the *bay-tree*; which scorns to be a mean pensioner on a few transient sunny gleams; or, with a servile obsequiousness, to vary its appearance, in conformity to the changing seasons: by such indications of sterling worth and staunch resolution, reading a lecture to the poet's genius, while it weaves the chaplet for his temples.—These, and a few other plants,

clad with native verdure, retain their comely aspect, in the bleakest climes, and in the coldest months.

Such, and so durable, are the accomplishments of a *refined* understanding, and an *amiable* temper. The tawdry ornaments of dress, which catch the unthinking vulgar, soon become insipid and despicable. The rubied lip, and the rosy cheek, fade. Even the sparkling wit*, as well as the sparkingeye, please but for a moment. But the virtuous mind has charms, which survive the decay of every inferior embellishment; charms, which add to the fra-

* “ How little does GOD esteem the things that men count great; the endowments of *wit* and eloquence, that men admire in some! Alas! how poor are they to him! He respecteth not any who are wise in heart: they are nothing, and less than nothing, in his eyes. Even wise men admire, how little it is that men know; how small a matter lies under the sound of these popular wonders, a learned man, a great scholar, a great statesman. How much more doth the all-wise GOD meanly account of these! He often discovers, even to the world, their meanness. He *besoots* them. So valour, or birth, or worldly greatness, these he gives, and gives as things he makes no great reckoning of, to such as shall never see his face; and calls to the inheritance of glory poor despised creatures, that are looked on as the *off-scourings* and *refuse* of the world.”

—THUS says an excellent author; who writes with the most amiable spirit of benevolence; with the most unaffected air of humility; and, like the sacred originals, from which he copies, with a majestic simplicity of style.—Whose *select works* I may venture to recommend, not only as a treasure, but as a MINE, of genuine, sterling, evangelical piety.—See page 510. of Archbishop LEIGHTON'S *select works*, the *Edinburgh* edition, octavo. Which it is necessary to specify, because the *London* edition does not contain that part of his writings which has supplied me with the preceding quotation.

grancy of the flower, the *permanency* of the ever-green.

Such, likewise, is the happiness of the sincerely religious; like a tree, says the inspired moralist, "whose leaf shall not fall." He borrows not his peace from external circumstances; but has a fund within, and is "satisfied from himself*." Even though impoverished by calamitous accidents, he is rich in the *possession* of grace, and richer in the *hope* of glory. His joys are infinitely superior to, as well as nobly independent on, the transitory glow of sensual delight, or the capricious favours of what the world calls Fortune.

IF the *snow* composes the light-armed troops of the sky, methinks the *hail* constitutes its heavy artillery†. When driven by a vehement wind, with what dreadful impetuosity does that stony shower fall! How it rebounds from the frozen ground, and rattles on the resounding dome! It attenuates the rivers into smoke, or scourges them into foam. It crushes the infant flowers; cuts in pieces the gardener's early plants; and batters the feeble fortification of his glasses into shivers. It darts into the traveller's face: he turns, with haste, from the stroke; or feels, on his cheek, for the gushing blood. If he would retreat into the house, it follows him even thi-

* Prov. xiv. 14.

† He casteth forth his ice like morsels, Psal. cxlvii. 17. Which, in modern language, might be thus expressed: He poureth his hail like a volley of shot. The word פתים, inadequately translated morsels, alludes, I think, to those fragments of the rock, or those smooth stones from the brook, which in day of battle the warriors hurled from their slings.

ther : and, like a determined enemy, that pushes the pursuit, dashes through the crackling panes. —But the fierce attack is quickly over. The clouds have soon spent their shafts; soon unstrung their bow. Happy for the inhabitants of the earth, that a sally so dreadfully *furious*, should be so remarkably *short*! What else could endure the shock, or escape destruction?

BUT behold a *bow*, of no hostile intention! a bow, painted in variegated colours, on the disburdened cloud. How vast is the extent, how delicate the texture, of that *showery arch*! It compasseth the heavens with a glorious circle, and teaches us to forget the horrors of the storm. Elegant its form, and rich its tincture; but more delightful its sacred significance. While the violet and the rose blush in its beautiful aspect, the olive-branch smiles in its gracious import. It writes, in radiant dyes, what the angels sung in harmonious strains; “Peace “ on earth, and good-will towards men.” It is the stamp of *insurance*, for the continuance of seed time and harvest; for the preservation and security of the visible world*. It is the comfortable *token*† of a better state, and a happier kingdom;—a kingdom, where sin shall cease, and misery be abolished; where storms shall beat, and winter pierce no more; but holiness, happiness, and joy, like one unbounded *spring*, for ever, ever bloom.

* Gen. ix. 12,—16. † Rev. iv. 3.

End of Meditations and Contemplations.

A TABLE OF THE TEXTS,

More or less illustrated in this WORK.

N. B. *As Dr. SHAW, in the Supplement to his excellent book of Travels, and several other authors of the greatest eminence, have given an Index of Scriptures, occasionally explained in their writings; I doubt not but I shall oblige many of my readers by what I here subjoin; those especially, whose taste is happily formed to relish the beauties of the Sacred Records.*

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